

Helping your Willow child with maths



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As your child moves from simple counting and adding to becoming a fluent mathematician, it is not always clear – especially to parents who are not confident mathematicians! – how to help. The fact is that parental help is still crucial at this stage. Here are some suggestions on ways to help your child at home.

Playing games - Games can really help children's maths. Adding dice scores, playing dominoes, track or card games all help children's numeracy.

Play games with cards – players take two cards and add the numbers - the player with the highest number wins. Try it with subtraction, multiplication, and division too.

Play 'Think of a number' – you think of a number between 0-100, and they have to guess. They can ask questions like 'is it less than 20?'

Play with blocks like Lego or Jenga – talk about size, colour, shape, weight, texture. Create patterns and structures. Ask them to guess how many blocks they could pile up without them falling down and then build them up to see if they were correct.

Play with containers – e.g. How many sweets are in the jar? Ask your child to guess and then count to see how close they were.

Play board games like Connect 4, Snakes and Ladders, Jacks, Dominos.

Play short memory games in the car or on the bus – first person to add 2 or 3 car numbers to make 100 is the winner!

What skills are we practising?

Counting, relationships between numbers, adding and subtracting, multiplication and division, estimating, shape and measure, sequences and patterns, reasoning, problem solving.

Maths in the environment

Go on a shape hunt – how many rectangles, triangles, pentagons, hexagons can you and your child find? Are they 2D or 3D? You can look for patterns and symmetry too.

Play outside games that use counting - Hopscotch, Hide and Seek, What's the Time Mr Wolf, Skipping, Hula Hooping. Practise times tables by counting in multiples e.g. 4, 8, 12, 16...or 7, 14, 21, 28.

Play sport - Sports are the perfect chance to talk about speed, scores, time and angles. Get competitive - try out different angles to try and score from. How many star jumps can they do in a minute?

Ask them to give you directions to local landmarks/important places. How long does each stage of the journey take?

Use sticks for shape challenges - how many triangles can they make with 9 sticks?

Explore the local area and ask them to guess - how many buildings do they think are on the street? How far is it to the nearest river? How many cows/dogs/cats live in your town? Ask for the reasons behind their answers.

What skills are we practising?

Pattern, shape, counting, adding, subtraction, time, speed, angles, measurement, sequences, multiplication and division, estimation, reasoning, problem solving

Maths and Money

As your child starts to understand a bit more about money, you can start using it for more maths conversations and activities.

Estimate – at the shops ask your child to estimate how much 3 or 4 items will come to.

Give them small amounts of pocket money e.g 50p - what can they buy? If they want to save for something, how long with it take them?

Talk about the items you buy - which are more expensive, which are cheaper? Which are heavier, which are lighter?

Explore quantities by asking them to think about how many different ways they can make 50p. How many 10p coins do you need to make £1?

When you buy something, get your child to hand over the money. Check the change with them afterwards.

What skills are we practising?

Identifying shapes, adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, numbers in between whole numbers, place value, counting, estimating, comparing, checking, reasoning, problem solving.

Learning number facts: One of the simplest and truly most effective ways of supporting your child in maths is to make sure that they know their basic number facts off by heart. These are the pairs of numbers which add together to make all of the numbers up to ten. Children need to know that 6 is 5 + 1, or 4 + 2, or 3 + 3; and that 10 is 5 + 5 or 4 + 6 or 3 + 7 or 2 + 8 or 1 + 9. Knowing these means that they also know that 24 + 6 is 30, that 510 + 90 is 600 and that £1.24 + 6p is £1.30 – all essential to being a confident calculator!

Tables and more tables... It is as important as it ever was that children learn their tables. Follow these simple rules for best effect:

Make sure your child can not only recite their times tables (one six is six, two sixes are twelve, etc.) but that they can answer random questions, e.g. 'what are four sixes?'

Test them by asking division as well as multiplication facts, e.g. 'what is 64 divided by 8?' as well as 'what are eight eights?'

If they don't know a fact, have they tried 'turning it round'? So they might not remember five sevens, but they will almost certainly know seven fives. You can always 'turn round' a multiplication $5 \times 7 = 7 \times 5$.

Another easy technique is doubling up. If they can't remember four sixes, try four threes (12) and double it. This works for the 6x table and the 8x table (double 4).

Use some simple mnemonics. E.g. $56 = 7 \times 8$ or five, six, seven, eight to remember this fact!

Golden Rules

DO give LOTS of praise. Resist the temptation to point out mistakes every time a child does a 'sum' wrong. Children need encouragement to be confident, and a confident child makes a better learner.

DON'T push a skill, especially if a child is becoming confused or is feeling pressured. It pays to talk to the teacher if you feel your child is not understanding something, rather than confuse them further by teaching them in a different way.

DO play games! The evidence shows that children who play games do better at maths!

DON'T force workbooks on your child. They will do plenty of writing in their maths books at school. At home, it is great to help them memorise number facts and to practise doing simple calculations in our heads.

DO 'little and often'! For example, talk about the maths you are doing when cooking or down the shops. Play a Times Tables game as you drive to school.

DON'T stress written sums laid out as you used to do them! Nowadays it is the development of what we call 'numerical fluency' that counts. Children need to be comfortable with numbers, to understand how they work and to be confident in doing mental calculations.

Refer to the school's Calculation Policy to help your child remember how to do calculations