

## Go Beyond Grades

# Questions to Ask Your Child's Teacher About Math



FOR  
K-8

Math skills are essential for life – including daily tasks, problem-solving, creativity, career options and more. Here are questions to ask your child's teacher as well as tips and resources to support math at home.

### Is my child at grade level in math?

- > Report card grades are only part of the story. Ask about other measures such as 'benchmark' tests (MAP Growth, Mclass, I-ready, etc.) that together give you a full picture of grade-level progress. You want to hear how the school is finding out what your child knows and how they will build from there.
- > If your child isn't at grade level, ask: how are they being supported with skills from past grade levels (known as remediation) while also focusing on grade-level skills (known as [acceleration](#)).
- > Find out what they need to learn to get them on track for grade level. For example, just as phonological awareness is critical to learn to read, developing a strong '[number sense](#)' is critical for math.
- > Ask for grade-level math examples like classwork so that you know what it looks like.

### Can you tell me how our school teaches math? Does our school use an evidence-based curriculum?

- > Once you know the name of the curriculum or instructional program your school uses, check [EdReports](#) to see reviews and whether it receives high marks.
- > If the program is rated highly, ask if it includes parent resources you can access at home. It's best to start with these before moving to outside sources. If you have questions about how they work, ask the school for help.
- > If the program is rated poorly, ask the principal or district leaders how the curriculum was chosen, how long ago, and if and when it might be updated. Learn more on how to advocate for high-quality curriculum [here](#).

### What else should I be looking out for as my child does math homework and classwork?

- > "[Today's math](#)" might look different to parents but it's intended to set kids up for the real world. Look for how your child shows they really understand the math skills being taught and are able to use (apply) them.
- > Math anxiety can be real, but you can help your child build confidence to not only succeed in math but love it, too! For example, you can support your child's math learning by 1) Reminding them that making mistakes is how we learn 2) Working with your child and their teacher to set and track goals 3) Celebrating progress and success! Zearn offers [free resources](#) to help families create a positive mindset around math (including embracing positive struggle).

Try this free [Readiness Check](#) to get a gut check on how your child is progressing with key grade-level skills. Get activities and videos to support those skills at home. Khan Academy's [Get Ready courses](#) help prepare students for their next grade level. PBS Learning Media has [free videos](#) sorted by grade level and subject.

# How to Support Math at Home

## 1 Support the building blocks of math

Early math skills will help fill your child's **toolbox** for more advanced math. For example, being able to identify how many items are in a group without needing to count each one. Practice with younger children by putting up fingers for 2-3 seconds and asking them how many they saw. Try passing a ball back and forth as you count by threes or fives. **Make it more interesting** by starting to count from a different number, like counting by threes from 133. Or, count backward starting from different numbers and walk backward at the same time!

## 2 Discover the fun...together!

**Playful activities** can help your child see the fun in math. Use dice to practice addition, subtraction, and multiplication (and get in some physical activity!). Roll the dice and call out whether your child should add, subtract, or multiply the two numbers, and then jump up and down that number of times.

## 3 Find math everywhere

Show your child how math surrounds them every day. **Discover the math** in cooking – compare measurements of ingredients; halve or double a recipe; and identify numbers by setting timers and temperatures. Explore the **practical ways** math will help kids in the future by creating weekly budgets; use shapes and measurement to design structures as an architect would; or play store and determine the sum of items at checkout as well as percentage discounts.

## 4 Get a head start on algebra

The **building blocks of algebra** include basic things like recognizing patterns and exploring relationships between two or more things. Practice patterns using blocks and beads, or clap and stomp out patterns. Engage kids in solving **real-world problems** like figuring out how much food to make for a party based on the number of guests, figuring out how many chocolate chips are needed if X number of cookies each has 6 chocolate chips, or how many books you can buy if they each cost X and you have Y dollars. Developing a “math mindset” early on with activities like these will prime children's minds for algebra and more challenging math skills as they grow.

## 5 Make math relatable

Math is everywhere – including interests and hobbies! Weave math into conversations about **sports** by comparing game scores or calculating batting averages. Boost counting and pattern recognition skills by writing a song or even choreographing a short **dance** together. Talking and thinking about math in ways kids can relate to will get them excited about all of the ways they can use math.