

Everyday Math Activities Kids Can Do at Home

Opportunities Abound in the Kitchen, Grocery Store, and Elsewhere

By Amanda Morin

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Since many newer math programs work hard to help children recognize math in the real world, finding everyday math activities at home is a great way for parents to reinforce this philosophy.

Opportunities to explore math with your child pop up everywhere. Going to the grocery store, cooking dinner or even watching the news together are some of the ways these opportunities present themselves.

Math in the Kitchen

At the end of a long day, when you're thinking about getting dinner ready and getting everybody off to various appointments and lessons, creating mathematical moments is probably the farthest thing from your mind. However, having your child help you in the kitchen not only offers the benefit of an extra pair of hands but also involves math. From measuring and sequencing to estimation and multiplication the kitchen is a real-life school for kids of all ages.

Math on the Road

While road trips and other types of travel are a wonderful way to get away from the pressures and responsibilities of real life, they also provide some really interesting opportunities to practice math.

A game called license plate math requires participants to pretend to be spies breaking codes to turn letters into numbers. That's only one of many ways to drive home math while you're driving away from home. There's also budgeting meal money, calculating the cost of gas and figuring out distances on maps.

Math at the Grocery Store

Grocery shopping, or any other kind, can be a stressful chore when your kids are with you. In between the cries of "can we buy that?" and "Ick, asparagus!" you can make the trip more manageable by drawing on some math learning. The store provides wonderful opportunities to, among other things, practice estimating cost, creating and sticking to a budget and using the scale to weigh produce.

Some Lemonade With Your Math?

Not all teachable math moments accompany everyday chores. Math comes in all forms, including lemonade stands. In addition to congratulating your child on his entrepreneurial spirit, you can add a few extra ingredients to his lemonade.

As your child starts to put his business plan into action, he'll need some help figuring out proportions, understanding capital investment and settling on a price that will bring in some profit.

Math Through the Whining

If you're like many parents, hearing the phrases "I want one of those" and "I want the bigger half" set your teeth on edge. Some of it is the tone of voice and some of it is the lack of mathematical understanding that comes with

the words. There's no bigger half. Ever. And there's rarely extra money for "one of those," whatever it may be.

That whining brings forth opportunities to teach children about making a budget, rounding to the nearest price and learning about sales taxes. The begging for the bigger half offers the chance to teach your children about fractions, equal shares, and division with and without remainders.

Cleaning up Your (Math) Act

Cleaning and carpooling: two of a parent's least favorite chores to complete. One involves a lot of time driving from house to house and the other involves a lot of time driving your kids back into their rooms. Using math can ease some of the frustration.

Carpooling provides a chance to have your children learn more about time—how much you need and how much you have. Cleaning up a room is a good time to introduce the concept of estimation (as in, how many toys are piled on the bed) and to have the real-life experience of time as you set a timer and ask them to beat the clock.

Indebted to Math (Learning About Debt)

Unfortunately for many people, debt is a part of their everyday life. Even if it isn't, your child probably hears a lot about debt and budget deficits in the news.

As depressing as it is, the subject contains many teachable moments. Explaining the concept of debt as it pertains to borrowing and sharing is one lesson you can share, as is helping your child understand what interest is and how it's calculated.

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