

# Math with Your Third Grader

page 1 of 2



You are your child's most important teacher. You can help your child be successful by talking about math in your daily life, helping with homework, and choosing activities like games and puzzles that help children practice basic skills. When talking about math, make sure your child can tell that you think math is useful, important, accessible, and interesting.

## Math in Family Life

By the end of third grade, children should have mastered addition and subtraction facts, as well as multiplication and division facts for 1, 2, 5, and 10; be able to add and subtract larger numbers; make good estimates; compare fractions; make measurements; and interpret tables and graphs. The examples below might give you some ideas about how to practice these and other important skills with your third grader as you go about your daily life.

### At Home

- Cook with your child. Ask him or her to measure ingredients and help you halve or double a recipe. Ask him or her to think about conversions. (*This can of coconut milk is 14 fluid ounces. We need to use a cup of coconut milk. How many fluid ounces will we have left once we've used the cup?*)
- Ask for your child's help in figuring elapsed time. (*It takes about 25 minutes to get to Aunt Sue's house. We're supposed to be there at 2:15. What time should we leave?*)
- Ask your child to use measurement tools like rulers and thermometers around the house. (*Do you think we need our scarves? Can you read the thermometer in the window to see how cold it is outside?*)
- Talk about how you and other adults you know use math in your jobs, or talk about how math is involved in jobs and activities that interest your child.

### At the Store

- Ask your child to figure out or estimate the new price for sale items.
- Pose simple multiplication and division problems about the items you're buying. (*If we buy 4 six-packs of water, how many bottles will we have in all? or There are 10 fruit snacks in a box, and we use 3 a day. If we buy 3 boxes, how many days will the fruit snacks last?*)
- Ask your child to figure prices based on cost per pound or number. (*This meat is \$3.99 per pound. If we get 3 pounds, how much will it cost? or These t-shirts are \$7.99 each. How much would 4 of them cost?*)

### On the Go

- Ask your child to calculate with gas prices. (*I only want to spend \$20 on gas today. It's \$3.87 per gallon. About how many gallons will we be able to get?*)
- Ask your child to think about fractions and distances. (*It's 23 miles to Imani's house. We've gone 7 miles. Is that more or less than a third of the way?*)

### Math Materials to Have at Home

- Keep these items in your home and help your child use them.
- calculator
  - ruler
  - measuring tape
  - calendar
  - clock with hands
  - measuring cups
  - measuring spoons
  - many real coins and bills of different amounts
  - outdoor thermometer

### Games That Use Math

- Playing games together is a relaxed and effective way to improve students' basic skills. The following games are appropriate for third graders.
- Monopoly
  - Battleship
  - UNO
  - Yahtzee
  - Mastermind
  - Parcheesi
  - Sorry!
  - checkers
  - chess

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page 2 of 2

## Helping with Homework

You show your child that math and school are important when you help with homework. You can also see what your child is learning and make sure that your child is mastering the skills you think are important. The following ideas can help make homework time enjoyable and productive for you and your child.

### Attitude

- Approach homework with an open, can-do attitude. Try to show your child that you find math interesting, enjoyable, and do-able.
- Express confidence in your child's and your own ability to do math. Even if you found math frustrating when you were in school, try to avoid saying things like, "Math is so hard." Instead, you could say, "Sometimes I get stuck when I'm doing math, but if I take a break and try again, I might get a new idea."
- Keep interactions about math relaxed and enjoyable. Don't drill your child on facts over dinner.
- Praise persistence and creativity in problem solving, as well as finding the right answer.

### Solving Difficult Problems

- If your child is confused, take time to listen before offering help. You'll need to know what is confusing to your child before you can be helpful, and it is important for your child to learn how to describe what is confusing and why.
- If you both get stumped on a problem, take a break and come back to it in a few minutes.
- If you and your child both get stuck, focus on writing a clear question or explanation of what is confusing. Have your child show it to the teacher to get more help. This helps your child take responsibility for his or her own learning and develop a good relationship with the teacher.

### Helpful Problem Solving Strategies

- Have your child solve a similar problem with smaller, easier numbers first.
- Have your child use objects like dried beans, pieces of pasta, or coins to solve a problem.
- Act out the problem or draw a picture of the problem with your child.
- After your child has finished the problem, have him or her check the answer by working the problem backwards. (For example, if she subtracted to find the answer, she would add to check it.) It is important for students to check their own work to be sure their answers make sense and are correct.
- Talk about how you solve problems: your thinking processes and methods may be useful to your child.

If Your Child Struggles	If Your Child Excels
Talk to your child's teacher if he or she struggles with homework. The teacher can suggest or provide games or worksheets for use at home. Set specific goals with the teacher (e.g., master all the times-5 facts) and keep track of progress toward them so that practice at home is focused and productive.	Your child's teacher can recommend challenging and engaging games and activities. You might also want to subscribe to a kids' math magazine like <i>Math</i> or <i>Dynamath</i> . The Web sites below are also good sources of problems, challenges, and real-world math connections. plus.maths.org rich.maths.org/public/ www.figurethis.org/challenges/challenge_index.htm

For more information about helping your third grader with math, including mathematical background and online practice games, go to [www.mathlearningcenter.org/resources/materials/parents3.asp](http://www.mathlearningcenter.org/resources/materials/parents3.asp).