

A parent is a child's first and most important teacher, which is why the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 recognizes parents' vital role in education.

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings



Helping children to appreciate and master mathematics is more important today than ever before. An increasingly technological world demands strong mathematical skills for the workforce and everyday life, and these demands will increase in the future.

Research has shown that children are more likely to be successful in mathematics and other academic subjects when parents actively support their learning. To ensure that children are on track for success in school, college, and the workforce, parents must become involved early and stay involved throughout their children's school years. This involvement can help reinforce children's skills and positive attitude toward mathematics.

Parents also can do many things in everyday situations that can help their children learn to solve problems and develop reasoning abilities, which are fundamental skills for learning mathematics. Simple routines such as grocery shopping and doing laundry can become learning experiences.

The No Child Left Behind Act, the national effort to improve education, recognizes that it is vital for children to master the core academic subjects like mathematics if they are to perform to the highest standards of achievement. This brochure is based on the *Helping Your Child* series of publications for parents and families, which is designed to provide parents with the latest research and practical information to help them support their children and ensure their children's SUCCESS in school and in life.

## activity

Children learn by doing. They try new ideas and challenge old ones. But this learning does not just happen in school. You can help your child learn by providing him or her with safe, interesting learning experiences in a supportive atmosphere. Below is an example of such an activity.

### Find it (preschool–kindergarten)

Young children may not recognize that numbers are all around them. Pointing out numbers on everyday items increases their “number sense,” and lets them know that numbers are important and are used for many different purposes.

#### What you need:

- ★ Boxes,
- ★ Cans and bottles of food, and
- ★ Other household supplies.

#### What to do:

- ★ Place several boxes, cans, and bottles on the kitchen table. You might use a cereal box, a can of soup, and a bottle of dishwashing soap. Sit with your child and point out one or two numbers on each item.
- ★ Point to one of the items and say a number that is easy to see. Ask your child to find it. Then have him or her look for that number on the other items.
- ★ Have your child choose a number for you to find on one of the containers.

Research shows that a child's goals for and beliefs about learning are related to his or her performance in mathematics. Even if you as a parent are not good in mathematics or perhaps feel uncomfortable with the mathematics being taught in a given day's lesson, you can still support your child's mathematics learning by showing you value mathematics. To find out more about what you can do to ensure your child succeeds in mathematics, review the findings and recommendations of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel (see resources).

## tips for parents

You can help your child learn mathematics by offering insights into how to approach the subject. Your child will develop more confidence in his or her abilities by understanding the following points:

- ★ **Problems can be solved in different ways.** Although most mathematics problems have only one answer, there may be many ways to get that answer.
- ★ **Wrong answers sometimes can be useful.** Analyzing wrong answers can help your child understand the concepts underlying a problem and learn to apply reasoning skills to arrive at the correct answer.
- ★ **Being able to do mathematics in your head is important.** Mathematics is not restricted to pencil and paper activities. Doing mathematics in your head (“mental math”) is a valuable skill that comes in handy when making quick calculations in stores, restaurants, or gas stations. Let your child know that by using mental math, his or her mathematics skills will become stronger.
- ★ **It is sometimes okay to use a calculator to solve mathematics problems.** Let your child know that to use calculators correctly and most efficiently, he or she will need a strong foundation in mathematics.

## resources

This brochure was drawn from the larger booklet in the *Helping Your Child* series, “Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics,” which provides tips, resources, and fun activities that parents can use with children from preschool age through fifth grade to strengthen their mathematics skills and build positive attitudes toward mathematics. For more information on how you can help your child learn mathematics—along with a wide range of other subjects—visit the *Helping Your Child* series Web site at [www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html).

**Searching for more information on how you can help your child learn mathematics? Take a look at the following resources from the U.S. Department of Education and other organizations:**

**U.S. Department of Education:** [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or 1-800-USA-LEARN

**The National Mathematics Advisory Panel:** [www.ed.gov/mathpanel](http://www.ed.gov/mathpanel)

**The Parents Portal:** [www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml)

**Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE):** [www.ed.gov/free/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/free/index.html)

**Parental Information and Resource Centers:** [www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html)

**National Council of Teachers of Mathematics:** [www.nctm.org/resources/families.aspx](http://www.nctm.org/resources/families.aspx)

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# helping your child learn mathematics

**NoChild**  
LeftBehind  
U.S. Department of Education



You've got to know math if you're going to compete in this 21st-century world.

—President George W. Bush

