

Help your child succeed in math

Math tips for parents

For students in middle school

When parents are involved in their children's education, they will do better in school. Here are some tips for parents on how you can help your child succeed in math.

Be positive about math

- Express confidence in your child's ability to succeed in math.
- Help your child see errors as opportunities for learning.
- Share positive math memories from your past. It does not help to share negative experiences.

Make attendance a priority

- Schedule appointments and vacations outside of school time.
- In case of an absence, ensure your child has a reliable "study buddy" to collect handouts and relay assignment information.
- Encourage your child to make direct contact with the teacher upon return.

Encourage organization

- Ensure appropriate equipment is easily accessible—for example: sharp pencils, erasers, ruler, protractor, compass, calculator, and hole punch.
- Encourage your child to organize paper in binders and backpacks on a regular basis. Loose sheets should be titled and dated, and organized chronologically in divided sections of a binder.

- Help your child to keep organized. Encourage the use of a journal or day timer to record school assignments, homework and tests.
- Help your child set realistic short-term and long-term goals for improvement in math.
- Make sure your child keeps a healthy balance between schoolwork and other activities such as sports, clubs and friends. Help your child set priorities for extracurricular activities to make sure there is enough time for homework.

Connect mathematics to daily life

- Ask your child to estimate grocery bills, change, tax, tips, measurements, traveling distances and times, and the quantity of paint or carpet needed for a room.
- Talk about the ways in which you use mathematics in your job and daily life, and about mathematics in the newspaper (sports statistics, stock prices, math puzzles, graphs).
- Seize every opportunity to calculate mentally and talk about the process involved.

Stay informed

- Ask about math in school—what topics are being discussed? What's for homework? What's interesting?
- Read the curriculum documents for your child's grade, available at www.gnb.ca/0000/pub_teachers-e.asp

Ensure the basic facts are mastered

- Play family games to add excitement to repetitive practice. You can play:
 - card games—e.g. Cribbage, Set, Visual Brainstorms
 - board games—e.g. Chess, Backgammon, Mastermind, Mancala
 - computer games—e.g. Tetris, Cubis, Earthquake

Be supportive during homework

- Encourage your child to have a regular time of day to do homework—before he is too tired.
- Ask your child what math homework she has each day. Many schools have homework assignments posted on the school website or on a voice mail line, so you can find out what homework is assigned for your child's class.
- Encourage your child to write down a solution to each question – even if he's not sure it is correct.
- Check to see that all questions, and all parts to the questions are complete.
- Suggest corrections be made in pen, and ensure corrections are made.
- If no homework is assigned, review and reorganize previous work.
- Be resourceful when stuck:
 1. Reread the problem out loud – check the meaning of math terms.
 2. Highlight important information in the problem.
 3. Look for examples of similar solutions in texts and notes.
 4. Break the problem into parts.
 5. Discuss alternative approaches.
 6. Take a break and try again later.
 7. Phone a friend.

8. Look for information related to the topic on the Internet.

Help your child develop an assignment action plan

- Begin immediately and have a time plan.
- If any portion of the assignment seems confusing, clarify with the teacher immediately.
- "Chunk" lengthy assignments into parts.
- Follow instructions: if it is to be submitted in pencil, ensure this is done.
- Proofread math – suggest your child ask herself:
 - Have I made proper and effective use of mathematical terminology?
 - Have I used mathematical tools to ensure precision?
 - Have I included correct units where required?
 - Have I answered the question that was asked? Would someone else understand my solution process as it is written?
 - Have I completed all parts of the assignment?
 - Does my solution make sense?

Support active study techniques

- Clarify exact content of a test as soon as a date is assigned, and clear up uncertainties.
- Spread studying out over several days.
- Write, talk, sing—use variety to consolidate and retain information.
- Make study notes so that the material to be learned is in a condensed version.