

Math Is Everywhere!

Why Is This Important to My Child?

Language Development

When you first think of mathematics, you may think only of numeric computations. While such computations are a large part of written math, we also use mathematical concepts to verbally categorize our surroundings every day. The ability to use the language of math to describe a situation is an important part of language development.

When you describe the size or shape of an object to your children, you are using math to help them understand their world. We also use math when we talk about money, patterns, quantity, and measurements. Understanding basic ideas such as more and less involves math. You can incorporate math into your everyday life as you use descriptive words about time, size, shape, order, and patterns. Understanding the use of numbers to represent quantities of objects is another important verbal concept of math.

You can teach counting to your children as you count their toes, toys, or favorite treat. Read books that involve counting, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, by Eric Carle.

Cognitive Development

The ability to effectively teach math to young children requires a basic understanding of how children process information. Many math concepts are abstract. Because young children think about their world in concrete ways, it is important that adults present early math concepts through hands-on, real-life experiences.

Consider that you are laying a foundation upon which higher-level mathematics skills can be built. Math concepts are best taught through daily activities and play. When you play a board game with children, they learn one-to-one correspondence as they move their pieces as well as number recognition from dice or spinners. You can tailor math teaching to the interests of your young child. For example, if you have a toddler or a preschooler who is interested in animals, go on a walk and count all of the animals you see. Talk about which animals are smaller and which have more legs.

Be patient with your child when it comes to math. It takes time before children can cognitively understand concepts such as conservation and subtraction. Patiently incorporating math into your day will ensure that your child has the exposure necessary for eventual comprehension of higher-level mathematical concepts.

References

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Physical Development

Young children understand mathematical concepts best if they use their five senses while they learn. Show your child a variety of fruit (e.g., cantaloupe, apple, tangerine), slice the fruit into pieces, and divide the pieces among those present. Compare the sizes of the fruits, discuss the shapes and colors, and count the seeds and slices. From this seemingly simple activity, your child is learning many hands-on math concepts.

Try to find ways to teach math through play and physical activity. Games such as hopscotch, four square, and jumping rope teach counting, geometry, and order. For infants and toddlers you can sing nursery rhymes like “Ten in the Bed” and “Five Little Monkeys” to teach math through play. Make learning math enjoyable and your child will quickly grasp new concepts. Remember that play is the best math teacher for children.

Social/Emotional Development

Children’s social and emotional skills are strongly related to their academic success. Children who are emotionally capable of listening, following directions, and exercising patience will have a head start when it comes to learning math in an academic setting. Similarly, children who know how to share and interact appropriately with peers will also have a head start academically. Remember that teaching math can go hand in hand with teaching social and emotional skills. You can teach math skills while also teaching social skills, like sharing or taking turns.

For example, have your child offer a snack to friends or family members. Help your child count the slices or items available and distribute them equally. Play games with your child that teach them to wait their turn and follow directions. Board games teach these social skills while simultaneously teaching math skills.

Keep in mind that your child may not understand a mathematical concept such as fractions because they do not yet have the developmental ability to grasp it. Trust that as you diligently incorporate math concepts into daily life, your child will learn the skills he or she needs for academic success. Remember that social and emotional skills will help your child with academic learning.

References

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