

Tip Sheet

Help Your Preschooler Learn Math

Math can be scary for some adults, but not for young children. Even if you found math hard at school, don't pass along your fear of math to your kids. There are lots of easy, fun, simple things you can do to prepare your child to succeed in math. If you do all the things outlined in this tip sheet, your child will be ready for kindergarten math.

First of all, sing and dance with your

child! What, you may well ask, has singing and dancing to do with math? The answer is a lot! Music seems to stimulate a child's brain, making him more able to learn. When children learn rhythm and rhyme, they learn about patterns and sequences and they can memorize better. Maybe you learned your letters, numbers, and days of the week in a song when you were young. It is so much easier to learn these things when they are set to music. So sing nursery rhymes or put on some good music and sing along with your child.



There are lots of fun and easy math activities you can do with your child around the house or when you are driving, riding the bus, or walking to school.



- **Count everything you see**

Count blue cars, babies, houses on your street, ducks on the pond. Focus on the numbers 1 to 10 for children under 4, and 1 to 20 for 4- and 5-year-olds.



- **Play guessing games**

Ask your child to guess how many eggs are left in the carton, then count them. Ask your child to guess how many buttons are on his shirt, then count them. Ask your child to guess how many children are in her class, then count them.

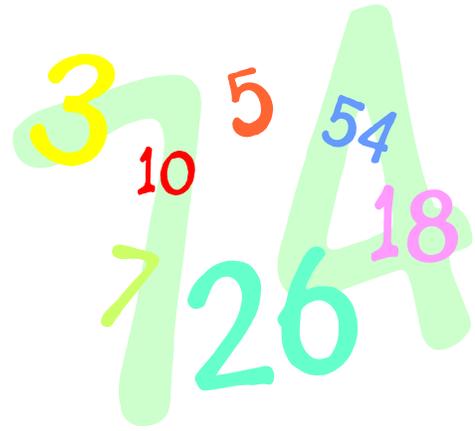
- **Sort objects such as buttons or seashells**

Sort them by color or size. Put all the big shells in one container and all the small ones in another. Mix up different kinds of pasta, such as shells, twists, and elbows. Ask your child to sort them by shape. (Don't do this with children under three who may still put small things in their mouths.) Sorting is an important early math skill.



- **Look for shapes all around you**

Look at traffic signs for these shapes:



- **Measure things at home**

Some hardware stores give away free yardsticks or rulers. Use these or a large plastic tape measure to help your child to measure things around the house. (Do not use metal tape measures– they can cut children quite badly.) Measure furniture, windows, countertops, the dog’s tail, floor tiles, and, of course, all the people in the family. If you have a scale, you can weigh your child and household items too. Keep a record of your child’s height and weight, and update it from time to time.



All of these ideas are fun. If children learn to view math as fun, they will love to learn to count, sort and measure. And they will be successful. What could be better than helping your child to be successful while you are having fun together!

Reference: Sawyers, K. and Hutson-Brandhagen (2004, July/August). “Music and Math: How Do We Make the Connection for Preschoolers?” *Child Care Information Exchange*, 159, 46-49.

- **Play board games with your child**

Dominoes and other simple, traditional games involve lots of math. Most board games involve counting, sorting and memorizing. And you will have a great time together learning math in this way.



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