

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

October 2014



Patrick County Public Schools
"Teaching Our Tomorrow"

SHORT NOTES

Ask for help early

If your child is having

trouble with a subject, you don't have to wait until parent-teacher conferences to bring up your concerns. Call or email the teacher for ideas. He may recommend an after-school reading group or new study strategies to try at home, for example.

Snail mail

Your mailbox is full of learning opportunities! Let your youngster check the mail and sort it into piles (bills, catalogs, invitations). For a math challenge, have her gather coupons and add up how much you'd save if you used them all. Or she could read a power company brochure to learn how your family can use less electricity.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the most common places for kids to find drugs is in a household medicine cabinet. Keep prescription and over-the-counter medications locked up, and talk to your child about what to do if a friend offers him medicine. Explain that it's dangerous to take a drug that his doctor didn't prescribe and that he doesn't need.

Worth quoting

"If you have good thoughts, they will shine out of your face like sunbeams."
Roald Dahl

JUST FOR FUN

Q: How do you tell which end of the worm is the head?

A: Tickle the middle and see which end laughs.



A plan for homework

Experts agree: Children tend to rise to their parents' expectations. And the expectations you set for your youngster about homework can motivate her to work hard. Consider this advice.

Create a "home office"

Setting aside a special workspace in your house shows your child that homework is a priority. Help her pick a place that's away from distractions, such as her bedroom or a corner of the family room, and stock it with school supplies. Then when she's working, let her hear you tell younger siblings, "Your sister is doing homework, so play quietly."

Make time

Will your youngster do homework right after school or later in the evening? Some kids work better if they have a snack and take a break after being in school all day. Others do best if they start right away—while they're still in "school mode." You might have your child try both to see



which works best. Once she decides, she should pencil in "homework" on a calendar or planner so she expects to do it at a certain time each day.

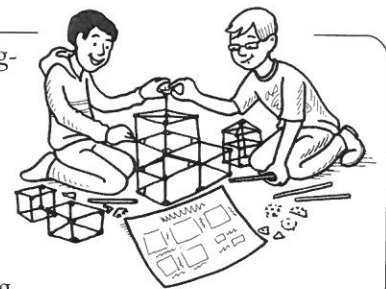
Encourage independence

When your child does homework, stay nearby and do your own thing (read a book, prepare dinner). That way, you're available if she needs you, but you're showing that you expect her to do her homework herself. *Tip:* If she asks for help, find out what she has already tried, and offer suggestions for figuring it out on her own. ("Maybe you could look at yesterday's assignment.")♥

Let's collaborate

Working well with others is a skill your youngster needs for school and his future career. Try these ideas at home:

- Team up to make family decisions like where to go on a day trip. Share your ideas, and try to agree on the answer. Ask, "Does everyone agree?" and if not, explain your reasoning. ("I know you like the national park, but it's far. Going to the state park means more time there and less time in the car.")
- Encourage your youngster to collaborate with friends when they visit. Would they like to build a city with toy buildings and cars? They might work together to draw a blueprint. To organize a neighborhood kickball tournament, they could divvy up teams and make a bracket.♥



Empathy: The bullying antidote

What causes children to bully others? There's no one answer, but empathy—the ability to understand and share another person's feelings—can help prevent bullying. Guide your child to develop empathy with these suggestions.

Use your imagination. Kids love to pretend. Encourage your youngster to imagine he is a new student in school, for instance. Ask him to



invite a student he doesn't know well to play with him at recess or to read a book together in the library. This can make your child less likely to bully others—and more apt to step in if someone else bullies his classmates.♥

say what that person may be feeling (“I don’t know anyone, so I’m a little nervous”) and how he’d like to be treated (“I hope someone will talk to me”).

Connect with others.

It's easier to feel empathetic toward someone you're familiar with. Suggest that your youngster get to know his classmates. He could

ACTIVITY CORNER



Making connections

There are no wrong answers in these games—as long as you can defend your choices! Play together, and your child will practice thinking deeply and strategically.



1. Creative categories. Choose a category (foods, places), and take turns naming something that fits. The catch? Each answer has to relate to the one before it. For instance, *carrot* is related to *cream cheese* (carrot cake has cream cheese frosting), and *cream cheese* is related to *bagel* (bagels taste good with cream cheese). Keep going until someone is stumped.

2. Degrees of separation. Name two famous people who don't seem connected (Benjamin Franklin, Dr. Seuss). The next player has to link them—in six moves or less. *Example:* Franklin links to George Washington (both were founding fathers). Washington links to Abraham Lincoln (both were presidents). Lincoln links to Dr. Seuss (he and the Cat in the Hat both wore tall hats).♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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Be a parent volunteer

Q: I've always wanted to volunteer in my daughter's school, but I work during the day. Is there a way I can still help out?

A: Absolutely. Any kind of help you provide will make a difference. Contact the teacher—she may be able to send home projects for you to work on in the evenings. For instance, she might give you materials to make geography games or ask you to create a list of kid-friendly poetry websites.

Also, consider volunteering with an after-school activity like chess club or Odyssey of the Mind, or at an evening event, such as a science fair or school carnival. Call the school office or visit the website to find out about activities and opportunities.

Finally, if you're able to take a few hours off, look at the school calendar, and plan ahead. Maybe you could take a shift at a book fair or chaperone a field trip.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Find teachable moments

At back-to-school night, my son's teacher talked about how she uses “teachable moments” so kids learn something from unexpected events.

For example, during a recent thunderstorm, the class counted the seconds between the lightning and thunder. Then they divided the number of seconds by 5 to figure out how many miles away the storm was.



I decided to be on the lookout for teachable moments, too. Last week, I called home while I was on a business trip. That led to a conversation about time zones around the world and when the sun would set where I was and at home. And yesterday, my son spotted a hot air balloon in the sky. We wondered whether it would drift in the same direction as the wind—and it did. We are both learning new things, and now we look for teachable moments when we're out together!♥

Home & School

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CONNECTION®

Patrick County School District
Dr Karen Wood PhD, Title I Director

SHORT NOTES

Celebrate progress

Suggest that your youngster create a fun reminder of all the things she has accomplished. Let her cover a container with construction paper and label it "I did it!" Then, she can write each success ("I memorized my times tables") on a slip of paper and put it in the container. If she's feeling discouraged, have her read the slips.

Excellent attendance

Being in school every day means your child won't miss out on learning. Try to schedule appointments and family trips outside of school hours. If he asks to stay home "just because," remind him of what he'll miss, such as his reading group or art class. Explain that he can be absent only if he's sick or if there's a family emergency.

Eat meals together

You may have heard that it's important for families to eat dinner together. But other meals count, too. If you work in the evenings, maybe you could make time for a family breakfast. On a weekend, try a picnic lunch! Research shows that children who regularly eat meals with their families tend to do better in school and avoid risky behavior.

Worth quoting

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up!"

Mark Twain

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What's yellow and smells just like green paint?

A: Yellow paint.



Homework solutions that work

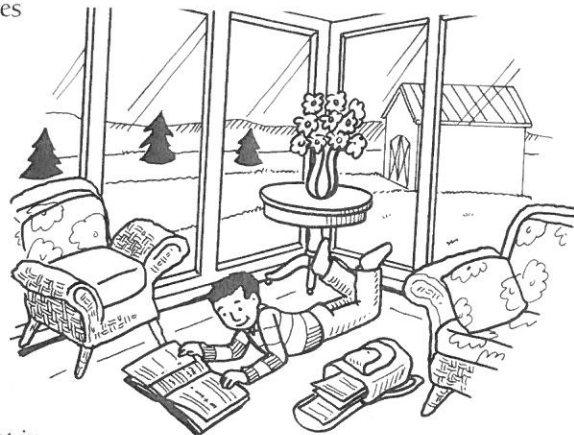
Like an actor rehearsing his lines or a batter working on his swing, your child does homework to practice what he learns in school. And if he's like most youngsters, homework brings occasional challenges. Here are solutions to common problems he might face.

Getting started

When your child gets home from school or after-school care, he might want to relax for a little while, or he may want to jump right in and work. Have him try each method for one week and keep track of how it goes. He could write notes in each day's calendar square. ("Went great!" or "Hard time getting started.") After two weeks, he can review the notes to see which routine worked best.

Staying motivated

Does your youngster ever feel restless when he's doing homework? Suggest that he get up and move to a new spot. For example, he might finish his vocabulary assignment at the kitchen table and then read his science chapter on the



porch. A planned break (say, to have a snack or take a walk) can also give him a second wind.

Solving problems

Help your child make a list of strategies he can use when he gets stuck. For a math assignment, he might try tools like a number line or find sample problems in his book. When he's reading, he could look up words in a dictionary or reread a paragraph. *Tip:* If he's still stumped, he might call a friend or write down his question to ask his teacher the next day.♥

Family teamwork

Whether your youngsters are doing a group project or playing Hacky Sack, a team effort is needed. Everyone's a winner with these games that will show them teamwork in action.

Lower the yardstick. Together, hold a yardstick horizontally so that everyone has one finger underneath. Then, lower the yardstick to the ground—but if anyone's finger drops away, you have to start over. See how many tries it takes to get the yardstick to the floor.

Pass the ball. Sit in a circle with your feet out toward the center. Pass a ball around the circle—using only your feet. How many times can the ball go around before it drops on the ground?♥



Good consequences

Behaving well and working hard pay off! Help your child see the results of her efforts—you'll find yourself scolding her less often as she learns self-discipline.

Tie good behavior to nice outcomes.

If your youngster is quiet when you're on the phone, you might say, "You were so patient while I made that call. Would you like to play a game now?" Or when she goes to bed without a struggle, point out how energetic she seems the next morning.



Recognize success. Maybe you'd like your child's room to be neater. Tell her that if she keeps it clean for a month, you'll help her rearrange or redecorate it. By that time, picking up will probably be a habit. And she'll enjoy her room so much that she'll be motivated to keep it that way.

Tip: Try not to use rewards like toys or food. You'll train your youngster to expect something in exchange for behaving well. Plus, offering food as a reward can lead to unhealthy eating habits.♥

Ready, set, pretend!

No matter how old your youngster is, pretending can boost her creativity and teach her to think abstractly. Try these activities:



- Ask your child to close her eyes and imagine she's a person she has studied (explorer, inventor) or that she's visiting a place she has learned about (White House, rain forest). Encourage her to describe what she sees, hears, and smells. In the rain forest, for example, she might see colorful birds, hear monkeys howling, and smell damp leaves.

- Pick a random object (sponge). Have each family member list creative uses for it (pincushion, hamster tumbling mat, ice pack). After three minutes, compare your lists. The person with the most ideas gets to pick the next item.♥

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Q & A

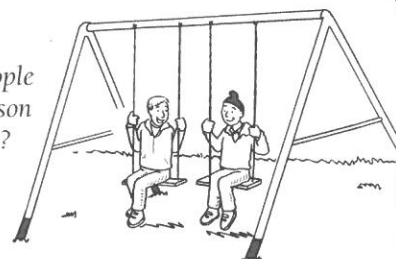
Respect differences

Q: We recently moved to an area where people speak several different languages, and our son has a lot of questions. How should we answer him?

A: It's great that your son is being exposed to a variety of cultures. You can use his curiosity to help him learn about respecting differences.

Explain that in many parts of the United States, people speak different languages, eat different foods, and wear different clothing than your family does. At the same time, they do many of the same things (play at the park, watch movies).

To help him understand, ask him to name one classmate who speaks English and one who speaks another language. Have him tell you something he has in common with each child (skateboarding, wearing sneakers) and one thing that they don't share (number of siblings, language spoken at home). He'll discover that language is just one of the many things that makes a person similar to or different from him.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Talking to kids about money

My children were always asking to buy things such as dress-up shoes or new games. They didn't seem to understand that these items weren't in our budget.

I wanted them to learn about how we spend our money—and that it is limited. So I got a spiral notebook and labeled it "Family Spending Journal." I explained that for two weeks, everyone would keep a record of what they spent money on. I listed items like my subway

fare, the electric bill, and the taxes taken out of my paycheck. The children wrote down expenses such as school lunch, soccer cleats, and field trip fees.

After a few days, they were surprised by how many things we needed money for. Our kids had no idea, for example, that we paid for taxes on our income, several types of insurance, and membership in our homeowners' association. Sometimes they still ask to buy too many things at the store, but when I say no, at least they understand why.♥



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia*

What if the library came to your



neighborhood on the back of a donkey? This is Jeanette Winter's true story of a Colombian schoolteacher's traveling library, which brought books to children in remote villages. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Dragons Love Tacos*



When a little boy discovers that dragons like to eat tacos, he decides to host a taco party for them. But if

a fire-breathing dragon accidentally gets a bite of spicy salsa, look out! A silly story by Adam Rubin about a dragon party that turns into a disaster.

■ *Just a Second*

In just 1 second, a bumblebee flaps its wings 100 times and the earth travels $18\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Steve Jenkins's nonfiction book will help your child think about time in fascinating ways. She'll also discover different methods of measuring time.

■ *Bedtime Is Canceled*

Maggie and her brother write their parents an official-looking note: "Bedtime is canceled." Somehow, the note blows out the window, lands in a newspaper office, and ends up in a headline. Soon, bedtime really is canceled, and exhausted children quickly discover the importance of sleep. A nice read-aloud by Cece Meng.



Storytime

Want to spend time with your youngster, build her reading skills, and help her learn to love books? You can do all three when you read aloud to her. Here are some suggestions.

Read regularly

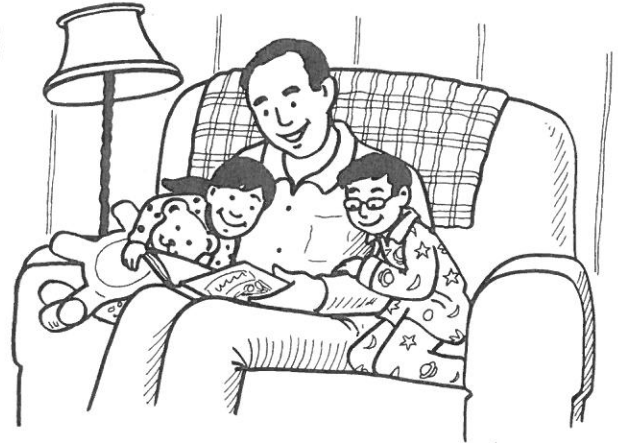
Try to read to your child every day. You might aim for 10–15 minutes of bedtime reading for a peaceful end to the day. Bring along a book, and read to her during a sibling's sports practice. Or curl up together with a book when you get home from work.

Take turns choosing books

Your youngster may want to hear old favorites again and again. Use your turn for new titles and variety (nonfiction, poetry).

Let her participate

Ask your child to turn the pages while you read. Also, she can finish sentences that rhyme or fill in words she



knows. Go slowly so she has time to understand the story and look at the illustrations. She'll enjoy read-aloud time more if she plays an active role.

Be playful

You can use different voices for different characters (a high, squeaky voice for a mouse or a deep, booming voice for a horse). Or substitute your youngster's name for the main character's name, and use family members' names for other characters. *Note:* You don't have to be an expert reader — your child will love it when you read aloud because it's *you*. ♥

Writing that makes sense

When a child first learns to write, his stories may not always make sense to others. Help his writing flow logically with these two ideas.

1. Let him read his stories to you. Ask questions to encourage him to add information ("What did you do with your friends at recess?") or to clear up a confusing part ("Who said, 'Let's go home'—you, or your brother?").

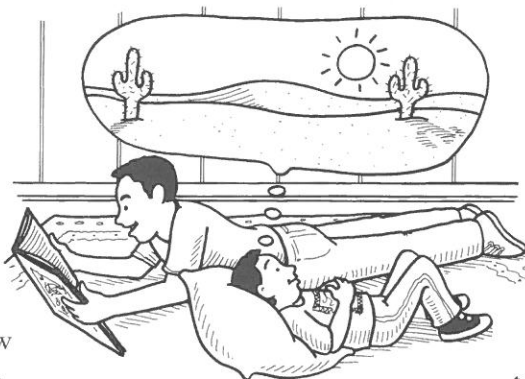
2. Even if he isn't writing sentences yet, he can tell you stories. He might describe the new class pet or something funny that happened at lunch. He'll practice relating events in a logical order, and that can help when he puts his thoughts and ideas down on paper. ♥



Read between the lines

Learning to infer, or “read between the lines,” is one key to good reading comprehension. Consider these tips for helping your youngster make inferences when he reads.

Describe the setting. Pick a book, and read a few sentences to your child (without him looking). Leave out words that name the setting. *Example:* “Sand stretched in all directions...cacti dotted the landscape.” Can he infer where the story is set? If he isn’t sure, give him a hint. (“Where do you see lots of sand and cacti?”)



Look for lessons. Fables are great for reading between the lines. Read one by Aesop, and help your youngster figure out the lesson. For instance, “*The Tortoise and the Hare*” teaches that even if you’re slow, you can win if you just keep going. Have him point out parts that he used to make his inference. (“The tortoise never stopped, and he took one good step after another.”)

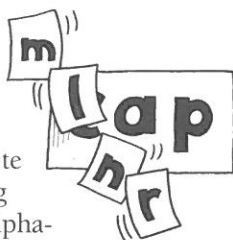
Use prompts. Questions that start with “Why do you think...?” or “How do you know...?” can encourage your child to infer. You might ask why he thinks a character behaved the way he did or how he knows it’s going to snow. Together, look for clues in the book that may help him answer the questions.♥

Fun with Words

Wordplay

Use these activities to build your child’s *phonemic* awareness—her ability to hear sounds in words:

- Choose a three-letter word, such as *cap*. Have your youngster substitute different beginning sounds from the alphabet to make new words (*lap, map, nap, rap, sap, tap, zap*). How many can she think of?



- Pick a long word, and tell her to clap once as she says each syllable. For *mozzarella*, she would clap four times: *moz-za-rel-la*.

- Ask your child to say a word without the first sound. *Example:* “Can you say *sit* without the *s*?” (*Answer: It*)

- Think of a word, and give your youngster a “sound” clue to figure it out. For instance, “I’m thinking of a word for something that you chew. The word has an *uh* sound in the middle.” (*Answer: Gum*)♥

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All kinds of words

A large vocabulary can turn your child into a better reader and writer. Try these everyday ways to help her learn new words.

Keep your ears open. When you and your youngster go places, point out words that people use. Maybe a waiter describes an *entree* or the dentist talks about *molars*. Encourage your child to figure out what they mean by the way they’re used.

Go beyond nouns. Help your youngster add verbs and adjectives to her vocabulary. Sports and games offer opportunities to use action words. Let your child hear you comment on the softball that *soars* or the runner who *sprints*. When she sends thank-you notes or greeting cards, suggest descriptive words (a *polka-dot* shirt, a *fantastic* birthday).♥



Parent to Parent

Build, read, and write!

My son James loves to play with blocks. At our parent-teacher conference last month, his teacher suggested that we use blocks to fit in extra reading and writing practice.

We found books about things he could make, such as castles, skyscrapers, and monuments, and I put them with his blocks for inspiration. At first, I thought he’d just look at the pictures, but he has started pointing

out facts that he reads, like how moats kept enemies away from castles. I also encouraged James to write signs to go with his buildings. When he made an airport, for example, he wrote “Tickets,” “Bags,” and “Taxi” on slips of paper and taped them to the blocks.

I’ve noticed that James’s buildings are more creative—and I’m happy that he’s reading and writing while he plays.♥



Math+Science Connection

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

Patrick County Public Schools
Cyndi Williams, Family Involvement

INFO BITS



Open-door angles

Doors in your house are the perfect place for hands-on practice with angles. Take turns opening or closing a door and asking, "Acute, right, or obtuse?" Partially open a door, and it's an acute angle. Open it straight out, and it's a right angle. Open it wider, and it's obtuse.

Habitat for rent

Help your child think about what animals need to survive (shelter, food, water). Then, have her choose an animal (monkey) and write a classified ad for a home that will meet its needs. *Example:* "Tall tree in a tropical rain forest. Large river nearby for drinking. Plenty of leaves, fruit, and insects to eat."

Book picks

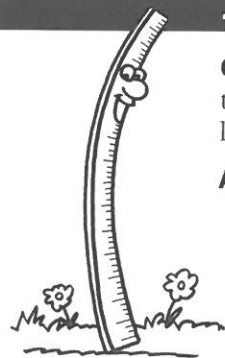
Hotel Infinity is fully booked, but there's always room for more. Read *The Cat in Numberland* (Ivar Ekeland) for a clever introduction to infinity.

Learning about the solar system is fun when planets tell the story themselves. Dan Green's *Astronomy: Out of This World!* contains fascinating facts and details along with cartoon illustrations your youngster is sure to love.

Just for fun

Q: What has three feet but no legs or arms?

A: A yard.



Fractions of fun

Understanding fractions is much easier when your child can visualize them. Here are ideas to help her see—and use—fractions.

Keep a diary. Show her that fractions are a part of everyday life. For a week, have her record and illustrate each one she notices. For instance, she might write, "We had a half day of school today," or "Mom asked for $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of turkey at the store." How many examples can she find and draw?

Play a game. Have each player cut a sheet of construction paper into six horizontal strips. She should leave the first one whole and then cut the second one in half (fold it, and cut along the fold), and the others into thirds, fourths, sixths, and eighths. With bits of masking tape, label a die: $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{6}$, $\frac{1}{8}$, and "wild." To play, roll the die, and lay the matching



piece of paper on your whole strip (for "wild," choose any piece). The goal is to be the first one to fill your strip without overlapping any pieces (*example:* $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} = 1$ whole strip).

Put in order. Together, make a set of fraction cards, with one fraction per index card ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, 1, $1\frac{1}{4}$, $1\frac{1}{2}$, $1\frac{3}{4}$, 2). Shuffle the cards, and see how quickly your youngster can put them in order. Then, while she closes her eyes, lay the cards in order but leave out a few. Give her the missing cards, and have her put them where they go.

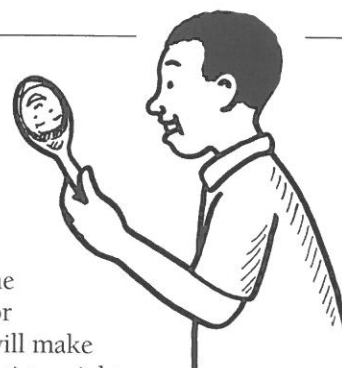
Look at me!

Help your youngster learn about the science of optics with this mealtime activity.

Have him look at himself in a clean spoon. What happens if he looks in the bowl of the spoon? (He's upside down.) What happens on the other side? (He's right side up.)

Next, have him bring his finger toward the spoon and watch what happens on each side. The bowl (the *concave* side) will magnify his finger, or make it look larger. The back (the *convex* side) will make his finger look smaller. Ask your child how scientists might use this information to make eyeglasses, cameras, or telescopes.

Tip: He can remember which side is which by thinking of concave as "caves in."



Multiply and divide

Learning to multiply and divide can be more about *thinking* than memorizing. Strategies like these can help your child practice.


Make it fun

Practice using toys or food. If your child collects toy animals, you might ask, "How many legs do 4 horses have?" He can "skip count" the legs by 4s (4, 8, 12, 16) to see that $4 \times 4 = 16$. If he has 17 pretzels and wants to give 3 friends an equal amount, he can "deal them out." He'll see that each person gets 5, and there are 2 left over. ($17 \div 3 = 5$, remainder 2)



Use what you know


Encourage your youngster to look for clues to help him solve problems. For 8×7 , he could consider other facts he knows. "I know 4 groups of $7 = 28$. I need 8 groups, so I can double that answer.

If $28 + 28 = 56$, then $8 \times 7 = 56$." For $30 \div 5$, he might say, "I know $10 \div 5 = 2$. There are three 10s in 30, and $3 \times 2 = 6$. So $30 \div 5$ must be 6." 

Q & A Ask math questions

Q: I've never felt comfortable with math. How should I talk to my children about what they're learning in math class?

A: Try to show enthusiasm for what your youngsters are doing in math. You might ask them each day at dinner or homework time what they studied in math that day. Let them explain the concepts they're working on, and follow up with questions. For instance, if they're learning about decimals, you could ask how decimal points are used in money (they separate the parts of a dollar from the whole dollar).

Then, when your children finish their homework, have them show you how they solved a few problems. As they explain their methods to you, they'll be reinforcing their own skills. And they'll be proud to be teaching you something! 




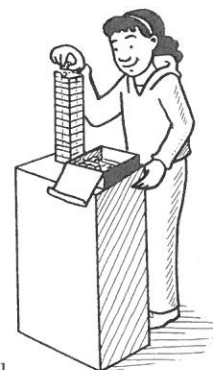
MATH CORNER

Find, build, compute

What do a shoebox, book, and refrigerator have in common? They are all rectangular prisms, or solid shapes with rectangles for their faces (sides). Encourage your child to explore geometry with this common shape.

Volume. Let her build a rectangular prism out of dice, sugar cubes, or same-sized Legos. Her model should be solid, with no hidden spaces. When she finishes, have her figure out the volume (count the cubes along the height, width, and length, and multiply the three numbers together). To check her math, she can take apart her structure and count all the cubes.

Dimensions. Give your youngster 36 blocks, and see how many different sizes of rectangular prisms she can build. Have her record dimensions of each one. *Examples:* $2 \times 2 \times 9$ and $2 \times 3 \times 6$. What do the sets have in common? (Each product equals 36.) 



SCIENCE LAB

Save your breath


Your youngster can inflate a balloon without using his breath. A chemical reaction will do the job for him!

You'll need: empty plastic soda bottle (20 fl. oz.), $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water, 1 tsp. baking soda, uninflated balloon, lemon juice

Here's how: Have your child add the water and baking soda to the bottle, close the cap, and swirl it around until the water is cloudy. Then, help him stretch out the

balloon and place the opening over the top of the bottle, leaving a small space. He should very quickly add a little lemon juice, seal the balloon completely over the bottle, and shake lightly.

What happens? The balloon inflates.

Why? When you mix an acid (lemon juice) with a base (baking soda), they create carbon dioxide. The molecules spread out as the gas forms, pushing against the walls of the balloon and causing it to inflate. 



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