

Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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The Math Around Us

Have you ever seen a child stand in one spot, hold their arms out, and spin? Ever watched two children split the last candy bar, divide up toys, or decide who goes first in a game? Or maybe you have watched a child study a flower, a seashell, or a leaf? If you have, then you have had the pleasure of seeing math the way children do; not as a number on a bank statement, but as part of the world around us.

Three to five-year-old children can learn about numbers, quantity, basic addition and subtraction, measurement, and shapes through play activities and household chores. You can support this learning by playing and having conversations with your child. Play is an effective learning tool because it gives children the time and freedom to choose

activities and practice skills without feeling pressured to succeed. Play also gives children the opportunity to exchange ideas and work together to solve problems.

The child who spins is learning about circles and how their body moves through space in relationship to objects around them. The two children splitting a candy bar are estimating its measurements while they divide it into two equal parts. Two or three children dividing up toys so they each have the same amount is an exploration of counting and quantity. When children investigate natural objects like seashells, they can see spirals, lines, shapes, and colors in many patterns. Some children use counting rhymes to decide who goes first in a game.

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READING ABOUT NUMBERS



Many children's books introduce math concepts in a fun way. Set aside fifteen minutes before your child's bedtime to cuddle with them and read a book. Here are some books about numbers and counting to look for in your local library:

- *Butterfly Counting* by Jerry Pallotta
- *Each Orange Has 8 Slices* by L.B. George
- *Edible Numbers* by Jennifer Vogel Bass
- *How Many Bugs in a Box?* by David A. Carter
- *Max Found Two Sticks* by B. Pinkney
- *On the Launch Pad* by Michael Dahl
- *One Family* by George Shannon
- *Seven Stars More!* by K. Mallat
- *Ten Little Rabbits* by V. Grossman
- *Ten, Nine, Eight* by M. Bang
- *Twelve Ways To Get To 11* by E. Merriam



Practicing Math with Play

A child's home and community can inspire curiosity and learning. Routines that you do every day give children the opportunity to practice new skills. Taking the time to talk to your child about math concepts while you are playing or engaged in routine activities is a fun way to support them in developing math skills. Here are some simple activities that can make math learning enjoyable for children.

Support an understanding of number sense (counting, adding, and subtracting):

- While driving or walking, count cars, trucks, people, signs, or colors.
- Count steps while going up or down stairs. Ask questions such as, "If we go back two steps, how many will that be?"
- Play games with cards and dominoes. Use dice for board games and let your child do the counting.



Encourage skills to develop an understanding of geometry concepts, which include naming, identifying, and using shapes, as well as recognizing how objects move in relationship to each other in a space (spatial awareness):

- Make a placemat by tracing the shapes of plates, cups, and utensils onto a piece of paper. Children can match the shape of the object to the placemat while they set the table.
- Ask your child to draw a map of your home or neighborhood.
- Use one finger to draw a shape on your child's back. Ask them to guess the shape.

Promote skills for understanding algebra concepts which include identifying, creating, and following patterns, and noticing what is alike and different:

- Go for a walk and look for patterns like lines on the sidewalk, colors of flowers, or types of trees.
- While playing with toys, identify and talk about patterns you see they have created (three blue toys, then one red toy, three blues, one red, etc.).
- When it's time to clean up, put away all the soft toys first, then all the plastic toys, then the books, etc.

Source: "Encouraging Rich Mathematical Experiences at Home" by Ginny Haugen and Kristen Haugen (Child Care Information Exchange, May 2003).

RECIPE Pasta e Fagioli Soup

Ingredients

- 2 medium carrots, peeled
- 2 stalks celery
- 1/2 medium onion
- 28 ounce can cannellini (white kidney) beans
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 32 ounces chicken or vegetable broth
- 28 ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 1 cup macaroni pasta, dry
- 2 tablespoons parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, grated

Instructions

Finely chop the carrots, celery, and onion. Rinse and drain the beans. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onions, carrots, and celery, and sauté for five minutes until they start to soften. Add the garlic, rosemary, and oregano, and sauté for one minute more. Pour in the broth, tomatoes, and beans. Cover and simmer for ten minutes. Add the macaroni noodles and simmer uncovered for about seven more minutes until the pasta is cooked. Stir in the parsley, salt, and pepper. Serve hot with a sprinkle of cheese on top.





The Importance of Self-Care

As a parent, you lead a busy life working or going to school while also caring for your family and home. But how much time do you spend taking care of yourself? There is a lot to be gained by investing in your own physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Your body will be healthier, you will feel more energized, be better equipped to handle stress, and find it easier to maintain a calm and positive attitude.

Take care of your physical health by eating nutritious meals, getting enough sleep, and staying active. Invite your child to help prepare meals so that they learn about healthy foods. Try playing some music after dinner and have a family dance party to get everyone moving, go for a family walk every day, or go to the park on weekends to play ball games. Inviting your family to join you will make it more enjoyable. Physical activity promotes fitness, feelings of happiness, and more restful sleep.

Prevent illnesses by keeping your home clean and disinfecting areas like the kitchen and bathroom where germs are most likely to spread. Practice health hygiene habits such as washing your hands with soap and water and using a tissue to cover coughs and sneezes. Schedule routine medical appointments such as a yearly physical or dental checkups to make sure your health needs are taken care of.

Practice activities to release stress throughout the day. These activities will help you stay positive, calm, and focused when facing challenges. Practice deep breathing at the beginning and end of your day, or whenever you start to experience stress. Take three deep breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth as slowly as you comfortably can.

Take fifteen minutes each day to do something you enjoy, such as reading, calling a friend, working on a craft, or relaxing with your favorite music.

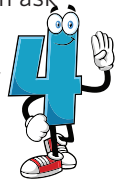
Talk to your child about how you practice self-care, and encourage them to join you in exercising, trying nutritious foods, and learning techniques for managing stress. Have discussions about what it means to be healthy and model strategies for coping with strong feelings. For example, "Let's pause to take some deep breaths together and then try working on this again." Recognizing when it is necessary to take a break, and learning to practice self-care, are valuable skills for both children and adults. Remember that taking care of yourself gives you more strength and energy to care for others.



For example, they might decide on a number and the person who ends up being that number goes first ("Bubble gum, bubble gum, in a dish, how many pieces do you wish? 1, 2, 3, 4."). Eventually they learn they can control who is "it" by who they point to first when they start the rhyme. This is advanced mathematical reasoning.



Children use math to explore the world every day. When they get dressed, they sort clothes and count socks and shoes. If they have cereal for breakfast, they measure it into a bowl and then pour in the right amount of milk. Children may not even be aware that they are counting, measuring, and exploring quantity, and this is where you can help. When you see your child doing an activity that uses math, you can ask a question to help them think about the concepts they are practicing. Try asking, "How many socks did you put on? What do they look like?"



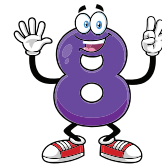
You can also help your child become more familiar with numbers by inviting them to help mark birthdays on the family calendar, count petals on flowers, use a calculator to type in prices at the grocery store, count toys as they put them away, and answer questions while

cooking. If you are making a snack, you might ask your child, "I was thinking we could have apples with peanut butter for a snack. I wonder how many apple slices I will need." They can count how many people are having the snack, count how many slices are in one apple, and decide if you need fewer or more apples. Cooking activities let your child explore quantities and practice measurement and estimation skills.



If you look for it, math can be found in the many ways children play throughout the day. Helping them identify that math and learn math vocabulary builds their understanding of math concepts and supports their ability to communicate their ideas. Each time you draw your child's attention to the math around them you are helping them grow and develop.

Source: California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume I by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).



ABOUT CHS

For over 130 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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