



HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH TODAY'S MATH

Foster the skills they need to succeed in school and life

What is "today's math?"

Today's math is designed to help your child compete and thrive in a rapidly changing world—academically, professionally, financially and socially.

Math education should prepare your child to graduate from high school, get into college, start a career, and make smart, informed decisions in every area of life. To do this, today's math education may look different than it did when you were a child. That's because the world is different.

We live in a different economy, with different jobs, requiring different skills. For your child to compete in top fields like science, medicine and technology, or even to create their own path, math—and the mental problem-solving skills it instills—is critical.

Math is also essential to making good decisions in daily life—whether applying for financial aid, comparing mortgage rates or planning for retirement.

Today's math is meant to prepare students to manage and enrich their lives.

What does today's math mean for my child?

The idea behind today's math is not just to do it, but also to understand how and why we do it. Students do not just learn numbers, equations, angles and theorems, but also put in context why these concepts matter in life.

As a basic example, let's consider a second-grade classroom. In this classroom, two apples plus two apples still equal four apples. But the teacher asks students to go a step further. How many apples would they need for a classroom party? What is the cost to

buy those apples? How much money do they need to have in the class budget?

Working through this series of questions helps your child develop problem-solving skills, which they can apply over and over to everyday life. The same goes for solving complex equations in a tenth-grade classroom. The students don't have to become mathematicians to apply the logical thinking they develop. Employers in every field value this skill.

Because of this deeper approach to learning, math problems may take a bit longer, but there also may be fewer assigned. Help your child stay focused. Encourage them to talk through the problem and the solution, and ask them to demonstrate their process as well as the answer.

If you visit your child's classroom, you may also see an emphasis on group learning. That's because working in teams builds greater understanding, creativity and innovation—all in high demand in the work world, and key to enriching every aspect of your child's life.



How can you support your child's math education

Make math fun and relevant to life

These are just a few examples of how you can incorporate math into daily life. Ask your child to help you:

- ✓ Estimate the cost of groceries in your cart.
- ✓ Pay your bills.
- ✓ Determine how many gallons of gas you can buy with a certain amount of money.
- ✓ Figure out how many calories you need to burn to work off snacks you ate during the day.
- ✓ Calculate the cost of school lunch for the week or month.
- ✓ Determine how long your child will have to save their allowance in order to buy a new toy.
- ✓ Compare the costs of different cell phone plans.
- ✓ Determine how much paint you need to paint your child's room.
- ✓ Figure out if it's more cost-effective to lease or buy a car.
- ✓ Measure your garden or window box to determine how many plants and vegetables you can fit.



Show how math is all around us:

Point out uses for math whenever you can—in the store, in the car or on vacation.

Be positive:

If you cried, “This is stupid, I’ll never use this,” while doing math when you were in school, you’re not alone. It was a common refrain. And that’s why the curriculum has evolved—to make math relevant to the real world. So if you get frustrated helping your child with homework, turn that frustration into determination. It’s okay to tell your child you don’t understand something. But make sure you also tell them how important it is to work through the problem until you arrive at an answer. Because they will use what they’re learning some day.

Talk to teachers if you don’t understand something:

If you feel ill-equipped to help your child with homework at times, or are confused about how they are being evaluated, talk to their teacher. Teachers know that parents have a lot of questions, and they are used to talking about today’s math. Find out how you can work together with your child’s teacher to support your child. Your state department of education also has materials explaining curriculum and assessments.

Set high expectations:

We know that every child is capable of succeeding in various math areas, including geometry, statistics, algebra, and calculus. It’s not just a select few who go on to more advanced topics. Push your child to pursue math all the way to their senior year. They’ll have a better chance of getting into and succeeding in college or advanced career and technical education training and going into a challenging and fulfilling career.



Resources

PTA Math Information for Parents:

pta.org/parents

Other Resources

There is a wide range of other Parents' Guides to help you ensure your child thrives at school. Here are just a few examples:

- ✓ Raising Ready Readers—Helping Your Child Learn to Read
- ✓ Raising Scientifically Literate Children
- ✓ Preparing Your Child for School

For these and other guides, visit NEA.org/Parents/NEAResources-Parents.html or pta.org/familyguides



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