

Simple advice on helping an infant child with maths

As children start school they will try to make connections between the things they are learning to do at school and the mathematics they meet in their everyday lives. It is at this stage that parents can be at their most influential. The number facts children learn, and the understanding they develop, will underpin their progress through the rest of their school career.

- **Practising our counting** - at every opportunity is always a good thing. We can specifically help by making sure that when our child is counting how many of something there are, she matches each number she says to an object by touching or gently moving it- this avoids making mistakes!
- **Playing games** - throwing dice, playing dominoes, as well as track games or card games all help children's numeracy at this stage. They need to recognise the numbers of dots or shapes without counting them and also to learn to add two or more small numbers. Games are a fun context in which to acquire these skills.
- **Reading and writing numbers** - help your child to write numbers, starting at the top and running the pencil down the numeral. When your child starts to write 2-digit numbers, be sure to emphasise the value of the first digit, reading 65 as sixty-five, stressing that this is sixty and five more.
- **Memorising their number facts** - one of the simplest and most effective ways of supporting your child's mathematical development is to ensure that they have learned their number facts off by heart. These are the pairs of numbers which add together to make all of the numbers up to and including ten. For example, children need to know that 6 is $5 + 1$, or $4 + 2$, or $3 + 3$; and that 10 is $5 + 5$ or $4 + 6$ or $3 + 7$ or $2 + 8$ or $1 + 9$.
- **Recognising and naming shapes** - the best way to help your child to identify common 2-D shapes is through art and craft. Your child needs to realise that what a shape is does not depend on which way up it is - a square is still a square even if it is standing on its point!
- **Telling the time** - help your child to master this difficult skill by taking it in stages. First stress the 'o-clocks'. "It's nearly five o'clock, time for tea!" Children can recognise o'clock times on a digital display (5:00) and on a clock face (big hand pointing up at the 12). Once they are good at this, introduce half past, big hand pointing down or digital 5:30. Finally teach quarter past and quarter to. This allows them to tell the time accurately enough for now!