

Helping Your Child With Math Homework

Very few activities have the potential to be more frustrating than helping your child with math homework. Solving math problems requires a set of skills that include knowledge of math facts, reading comprehension skills, organizational strategies, visualization skills, and both inductive and deductive logic. Add to this mix the simple fact many adults have bad memories of their own math experiences in school.

Parents want to help their child if they are struggling with homework but don't want to solve the problems for their child. In addition they fear that their way of solving a problem may not be the same as what the classroom teacher has taught. Often a parent may look at a homework assignment and think, "That's not the way I was taught!" Most math programs today emphasize reasoning, logic, and the solution of problems that are related to the student's real life experiences. Application of math skills is seen as more important than rote recitation of math facts.

How can a parent help if your child is having a problem with math homework?

1. Follow the basic homework rules:
 - a. Make certain that you have a space at home designated for homework.
 - b. Make certain that you have a designated time for homework every day.
 - c. Have all the materials necessary for homework in one place.
 - d. Try to cut down on distractions.
2. Make certain that your child has read **ALL** the directions.
3. Ask if the problems are similar to ones that were done in class. Look at previous assignments to see if the new assignment is similar. Have your child check their class notes to see if the new problem is similar to one completed in class.
4. Encourage your child to try different strategies such as patterning, using manipulatives, making a table or diagram, looking at similar problems, etc.
5. Encourage your child to talk with the teacher about any problems they experience. Ten minutes after school may pay countless dividends.
6. Ask where the child is having trouble. Is the problem one of understanding the process necessary to solve the problem, one of knowing the facts necessary to solve the problem, and/or one of understanding for what the problem asks.

Be willing to accept less than perfection. We really do learn from our mistakes.