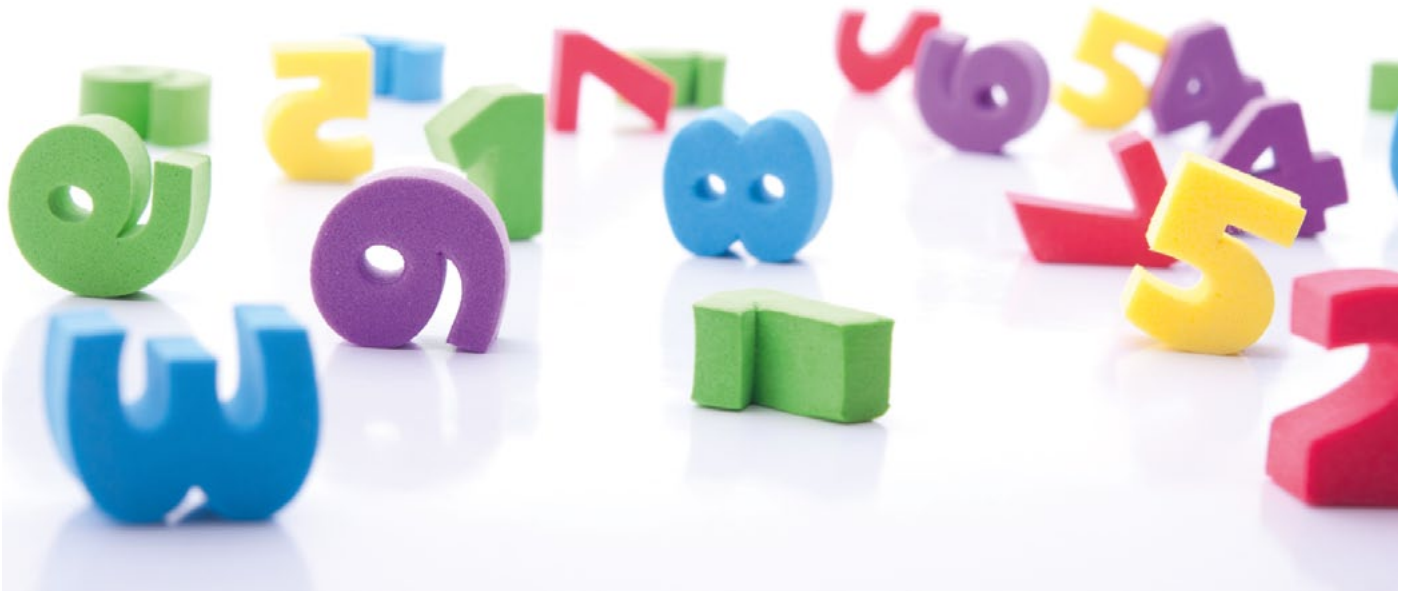


One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

Learning to have fun with numbers can help teach children some basic maths skills. By Tamlyn Vincent



Maths is an essential skill that we use every day, whether we are shopping, baking or doing DIY. Of course, not all children look forward to their maths lesson, no matter how important it is. To make things a little lighter, you can help by playing maths games at home, or when you're out and about. Approaching maths in different situations can be fun and educational, while still developing concepts and skills.

Here are some fun ways to develop foundational maths skills:

memory

- Concentration: Get a deck of cards and select 10 or 20 pairs. Shuffle these and place them upside down on a table. Players turn over two cards at a time with the object of finding a pair. If the cards are not a pair, they are turned upside down again and the next player goes. The player with the most pairs wins.

number identification and counting

- Songs and stories: there are many nursery rhymes, stories and songs that teach children about numbers. Think of Goldilocks or 10 Green Bottles.
- Number hunt: get children to find numbers on post boxes, window signs or road signs. Have a competition to see who can find the most fives for example.
- Counting: rote counting is a good skill and develops memory. But it is also important for children to gain a concept of the quantity those numbers represent. So ask them to count objects, stairs, stickers, money or anything you can find.
- 20 Questions: choose a number. Your partner can ask questions to identify the number: is it greater than 20? Can it be divided by three? The answer can only be yes or no. This improves their understanding of the characteristics of numbers and the terminology used.

adding and subtracting

- Maths Rummy: instead of collecting three of a kind, collect sums. If you have a 2, 3 and 5 you can go down, because $2 + 3 = 5$, or $5 - 2 = 3$. Get children to say the sum when putting down the cards.

- License plates: add, subtract or multiply the numbers. Ask children to get to a specific number by using the numbers of a license plate. They can add, subtract, multiply or divide.
- Play shop: set up shop at home with groceries or toys. Assign costs and give the children some fake money. They will need to add and subtract as they work out how much money is needed for different items.

estimation

- How many? Put items in a bag and ask children to guess how many items are in the bag. Or ask them to guess how much the items in your shopping basket will cost. For older children, this can be extended to how long for measurements, how far for distance, or how much longer for time.

visual skills

- 2D and 3D: to understand how items can be represented as 2D or 3D ask children to draw boxes or toys as 2D drawings, or vice versa.
- Identify shapes: ask children to find different shapes, such as road signs, and shapes in the garden or in a newspaper.
- Symmetry: develop an understanding of symmetry by folding paper and cutting out shapes. Fold paper in half for shapes like hearts, or fold it more times to get snowflakes or paper chains.
- Graphs: get children to draw graphs for things relevant to them, such as how much they like certain foods, or how many more red cars they see than blue cars.

weight

- Measure and weigh: give children a scale and ask them to weigh different things, such as uncooked rice and popcorn. An interesting exercise is to transfer the same amount of water or sand between differently shaped containers. This improves their understanding of volume.
- Baking: weighing, measuring and counting are an essential part of baking, so ask children to help with figuring out the quantity of ingredients needed.

distance and time

- Measuring: a tape measure can help children learn the basics of centimetres, as well as height, depth and width.
- Maps: work out how far you'll be travelling on your holiday, or figure out how far away the shop is from your house.
- Problem sums: when travelling ask your children to figure out how much longer you'll be driving, if you still have 100km to travel and you're going at 60km an hour. More advanced 'mathematicians' can work out how much petrol you'll still need to get somewhere.