

Finding the Math in Everyday Activities

You can do math with your child every day. Situations pop up all the time. Take advantage of such opportunities to do math together, to learn about your child's math thinking and understanding, and to share your own.

The following are excellent opportunities for engaging in math thinking. Encourage your child to solve problems mentally rather than over-relying on mathematical tools such as pencil and paper and calculators.

Activity	What's the Math?*
When shopping:	
How much do you think our groceries will cost?	Estimation, addition
How much money will we save if we use these coupons?	Addition, subtraction
How much change will we get if we give the clerk \$20.00?	Addition, subtraction
How much money will we get for recycling a certain number of cans?	Multiplication
How many cans were recycled if I got back \$.65?	Division
How much do you think this bag of [apples, potatoes] weighs? (Then weigh to find out.)	Estimating, measuring weight
At the post office:	
How many stamps on a sheet or in a book?	Counting, addition, multiplication
About how much will it cost to buy a certain number of stamps?	Estimation, addition, multiplication
How much change will we get if we give the clerk \$5?	Subtraction
How many stamps can I buy for a certain amount of money?	Division
How much do you think this package weighs? (Compare the estimate to the actual weight.)	Estimating, measuring weight
When driving, taking the bus or walking:	
About how many blocks until we get to a certain place? (Then count and find out.)	Estimating, measuring distances, counting
About how long will it take to get to a certain place? (Then time it to find out.)	Estimating, measuring time
How many dogs, stop signs or traffic lights do you think we will see along the way?	Predicting, collecting data, counting

If we take the bus [5] times today, how much will we spend on bus fare? How much will be left on our bus card?	Addition, multiplication, subtraction
If gas costs [\$3.15] per gallon, about how much will it cost to fill our [12] gallon tank? If we can drive approximately [25] miles for each gallon of gas, how far can we drive on that tank of gas?	Estimation, addition, multiplication
When doing laundry:	
Can you sort the clothes into whites and colors to wash them? What about sorting into three categories?	Sorting and classifying data
How many pair of socks can we make if there are 14 single socks? (Or, if there are 5 pairs, how many socks is that?)	Multiplication, division
If the washing machine costs [\$1.25] per load, and the dryer costs [\$1.50] per load, how much will it cost to do 2 loads of laundry? How many quarters will we need?	Addition, multiplication, division
If one load takes [1/2 cup] of detergent, how much detergent will we use to do [3] loads? (Or, if we use 3 cups of detergent, how many loads did we do?)	Adding fractions, dividing fractions
When cooking dinner:	
How many [plates, napkins, spoons] do we need for a certain number of people?	Counting
How much [water] do we need to measure when making [orange juice]?	Measuring, fractions
If this recipe calls for 3/4 cup of flour and we are doubling the recipe, how much flour do we need?	Adding fractions, measuring
When reading with your child:	
How many objects/pictures do you think are on this page? Let's count.	Estimating, counting
Do you think there are more birds or trees on this page? Why? How do you know?	Counting and comparing quantities
We're on page [27]. We're going to read the next chapter, which ends on page [42]. How many pages will we read? How many pages will we have left to read then?	Subtraction

*Questions that involve money also focus on reading and using decimal numbers.