



The BAWB Federation
Bainbridge, Askrigg, and West Burton Primary Schools
Mid-Dale Excellence in Education
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ADVICE FOR PARENTS – HELP YOUR CHILD LOVE MATHS!

When they are very young, children often talk about maths with curiosity and wonder; they delight in finding patterns and identifying numbers. Yet, when they grow older, some children feel that maths is confusing and scary and they are not a “maths person”.

What can parents do to help? Here are some suggestions:

1. Encourage children to play maths puzzles and games. Award-winning mathematician, Sarah Flannery, reported that her achievement and enthusiasm came not from school but from the puzzles she was given to solve at home. Puzzles and games – anything with a dice really – will help kids enjoy maths and develop number sense, which is critically important.
2. Always be encouraging and never tell kids they are wrong when they are working on maths problems. Instead, find the logic in their thinking – there is always some logic to what they say. For example, if your child multiplies 3 by 4 and gets 7, you could say, “Oh I see what you are thinking, you are using what you know about addition to add 3 and 4. When we multiply we have 4 groups of 3...”
3. Never share with your children the idea that you were bad at maths at school or that you dislike it – especially if you are a mother. Researchers found that as soon as mothers shared that idea with their daughters, their daughter’s achievement went down.
4. Encourage number sense. What separates high and low achievers is number sense – having an idea of the size of numbers and being able to separate and combine numbers flexibly. For example, when working out $29 + 56$, if you take one from the 56 and make it $30 + 55$, it is much easier to work out. The flexibility to work with numbers in this way is what is called number sense and it is very important.
5. Perhaps most important of all – encourage a “growth mindset”. Let children know that they have unlimited maths potential and that being good at maths is all about working hard. When children have a growth mindset, they do well with challenges and do better in school overall. When children have a fixed mindset and they encounter difficult work, they often conclude that they are not “a maths person”. One way in which parents encourage a fixed mindset is by telling their children they are “clever” when they do something well. That seems like a nice thing to do, but it sets children up for difficulties later - when kids later fail at something they will inevitably conclude that they aren’t clever after all. Instead use praise such as, “It is great that you have learned that.” When they tell you something is hard for them, or they have made a mistake, tell them: “When you find things hard it is good, it means you are learning and your brain is developing!”