

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IN FIRST GRADE?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Share Reading with Your Child

It's one of the most basic pieces of parenting advice and still one of the most important, even when your child is in first grade: read to and with him. Now that he is in the early stages of becoming a proficient reader himself, this can become more of a shared activity. For example, take turns reading pages of a book, which gives him a chance to show off his skills and allows you to help him sound out difficult words.

Keep Reading Material Handy

Fill your house with a variety of reading materials and make sure that your child sees you and other adults reading regularly so that he views it as a fun and positive activity.

Allow Easy Access to Writing Supplies

Make sure that your child has easy access to the tools and supplies he will need to practice the writing skills he is learning. Have a range of supplies on hand to make writing fun, such as different-colored pens, crayons, colored paper, and dry-erase boards.

Encourage Writing Through Lists

Encourage your child to practice writing by making lists. Make sure that writing is not something that is viewed as a just a school activity or homework. Give him reasons to write, for example, by making lists. Encourage him to help with the grocery shopping by writing a list. For holidays or birthdays, ask him to write a list of presents he would like, or have him compile a list of the chores he is responsible for.

Show How Writing is Practical

Show him the practical use of writing by helping him compose short reminder notes at home or letters to other family members. When he sees that writing serves a useful purpose he will be more likely to try it and to initiate writing on his own.

Value Your Child's Writing

Encourage your first grader to draw a picture and write a story that goes along with it, using any scribbling, characters, or spelling that makes sense to him. Display the result, as he does his artwork, by posting it on the fridge or framing it and putting it on your desk. This helps him see that you value his writing and think it is important.

Don't Correct All Spelling Mistakes

Don't go overboard in correcting your child's early efforts at writing. In the same way that, when he was learning to talk, you didn't correct every pronunciation error or grammatical mistake, now that he's learning to write, you don't want to inhibit him by focusing too much on what he's doing wrong. If you correct every error, beginning writers will start to close up, so allowing them more latitude encourages them to view writing as a fun activity and not work.

Make a Summer Scrapbook

At the start of the school year, make a scrapbook of your first grader's summer vacation, including photos and items related to activities he took part in. Ask him to tell you about the places the items came from, including why he was there and what he enjoyed about that day. Jot down his stories and memories, capturing his exact words as much as possible.

Always Carry Reading Materials

Never leave home without reading materials, for both you and your first grader. Always having a book or a magazine on hand for moments like a wait at a doctor's office, a long car ride, or just waiting in the car to pick up a sibling helps your child understand that reading is an enjoyable activity that he can do at any time.

Play Simple Word Games

Play simple word games with your first grader. For example, when you're on the road, have him spot words on signs that begin with a certain letter.

Learn Math from Everyday Objects

Your child can build an understanding of addition, subtraction, and the other math concepts he is learning in first grade by playing with everyday objects. Use items that he enjoys playing with, such as Legos, and place them into two groups of unequal number. Place the larger grouping on the left to develop the habit he will need later for subtracting from left to right. Next, ask him to add objects to the smaller group from the larger group until he counts the same number in both groups. As with all math activities, don't push it if your child resists since math development varies greatly from child to child and he may just not be ready for certain concepts.

Count with Items

Count using items like blocks, pennies, and candy. Have some items handy for counting by ones and by tens. You can use interlocking blocks that allow students to connect two blocks to three blocks to represent $2 + 3$. Use regular household items like pennies for counting by ones, and dimes for counting by tens.

Develop Estimation Skills

When things are stored or poured into varying size containers you have an opportunity to build your child's concept of estimation and quantity. At breakfast, ask him which bowl has more and which has less cereal. Ask him to compare the different amounts of the same liquid in three clear glasses by lining them up from least to most full. To build your child's vocabulary of comparisons, after successful practice use measuring cups with numbers. Ask him what he notices about the number each liquid reaches in the measuring cup when they are lined up in sequence from least to most and then from most to least full.

Read Math Problems Aloud

Help your child by reading math problems aloud slowly and carefully, so he can hear the problem and think about what is being asked. If he can read, have him read them.

Use Real Money

Children become so accustomed to seeing their parents pay with credit and debit cards that counting actual money can be an unfamiliar practice. Engage your child in the transaction of buying things at the store, allowing him to pay with cash and to count the change. This will help not only with his math skills but will foster an understanding of the concepts of saving and spending.

Reward Effort for Math

Speak positively about math and reward effort rather than grades or ability. Think about how important reading is and how we are told to model this behavior for our children. We need to place math in the same category. Don't discount the importance of math by saying, "I'm not a math person. I was never good at math." Help your child read books that incorporate math, such as *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gag, or *On Beyond a Million* by David Schwartz.

Use Analog Clocks

Go pre-digital with time. Reading time on a digital clock is vastly different than on a clock with a face. First grade standards focus on telling time to the hour and half hour, so have some old-fashioned analog clocks around your house as your child is learning to tell time. Consider giving him a wristwatch with a face, rather than a digital display.

Keep a Calendar at Home

Keep a calendar displayed in your home. Review the days of the week with your child and encourage him to count down the number of days until an event he is anticipating.

Play Games with Simple Math

Play a game in the car using simple addition or subtraction. For example: "I'm thinking of a number that equals seven when it is added to three. What number is that?" Look for opportunities to play simple addition and subtraction games, for example, while he is eating, with the number of items on his plate.

Play Games with Math Vocabulary

Play a mind-reader game. Think of a number for your child to guess. After each guess respond with the words "higher" or "lower." At different times use the words "more" or "less" so he learns different arithmetic vocabulary. This game helps him correlate the number words and counting sequence with actual amounts or sizes.

Play Family Math Games

Plenty of family games incorporate math. Tic Tac Toe, Connect Four, and Dominoes are just some of the many games that help build math skills.