

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IN FOURTH GRADE?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Encourage Reading

Find ways to encourage your child to read independently. Make sure that he has the time and space to devote to reading and that he has plenty of material to read for fun. Take him to the library regularly.

Use Technology to Encourage Reading

Learn how to use technology to help develop your fourth grader's growing interest in reading. There is a large selection of online books for children, many with interactive features such as animations or voice recording. You can also encourage his interest in reading by helping him find online sites about topics that interest him.

Discuss What Your Child is Reading

Ask your child about the books he is reading, both in school and for fun. Try to ask probing questions that go beyond having him just relate the action in a book. Ask about the themes of what he is reading and encourage him to summarize what he is reading and discuss it with you.

Set an Example for Good Reading Behavior

Continue to model good reading behavior by discussing what you are reading. If you've just read an interesting magazine article, tell your child what you learned from it.

Foster Effective Arguing

Encourage your child to learn to make a good argument. If he wants the privilege to do something that he has not previously been allowed to do, have him present an argument for doing so. Make sure he can back up the claims he is making. If he says that all his friends are allowed to do something, ask him to substantiate that claim.

Discuss the News

Engage your child in a discussion about the news stories you see on television or hear on the radio while you're in the car. He should be developing the skills that will make him an informed and discerning consumer of information. By discussing what is happening in the world, you can explain why certain issues are important and share your values with your child.

Find Reasons to Write

Real writing can happen all the time, both inside and outside school. Help your child find useful reasons to write outside school: A letter of complaint about a broken videogame, an invitation to a get-together, or a request for information about a sporting event. Make writing connected to real life and not just an exercise.

Use a Favorite Story

Most children have a favorite story that they ask their parents to tell them over and over again, maybe about the day they were born or the time a special event took place. Encourage your child to write this story down and to make a book about it. It could be illustrated with photos and could become a lasting family keepsake.

Play Vocabulary Games

Make a game out of broadening your child's vocabulary. Choose five unfamiliar new words for him to learn each week and see how often everyone in the family can use those words in everyday conversation. This will help improve your fourth grader's vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking skills.

Play Storytelling Games

A fun game to play in the car or home that can involve the whole family is "what happens next." Everyone should name a different object and then one person begins telling a story using all of these words. The next person must continue the story, picking up from where the last person stopped, while using at least one of the named objects, and having the story make sense as it continues. The silliness of where the storyline goes, combined with the use of the imagination, is a fun way to practice important listening and thinking skills.

MATH

Encourage a Positive Attitude Toward Math

It's around this age that many youngsters become discouraged by math and begin to think of it as a subject they're just not good at. Be aware of this and try to prevent your child from developing a defeatist attitude toward math. Encourage him to stick with it when a problem appears difficult and to approach it in different ways.

Read Math Problems Out Loud

If your child is struggling with math problems, have him read each problem out loud slowly and carefully, so he can hear the problem and think about what is being asked. This helps him break down the problem and come up with problem-solving strategies.

Integrate Math into Everyday Activities

Continue to find ways to integrate discussion of math concepts such as "times as much" into your everyday activities. Compare the weights of your child and his siblings, or the family pet. Figure out how many times your cat's weight your child weighs and how many times your child's weight his father weighs.

Keep an Eye Out for Math Concepts

Encourage your child to spot examples of some of the math concepts he is learning about. See how many right angles or right triangles he can spot, or have him look for parallel lines, such as train tracks or pillars in a building.

Highlight How Math is Used in Cooking

Baking and cooking are among the best ways to familiarize your child with how fractions work. Having him help out in the kitchen also reinforced valuable sequencing skills and time management concepts.

Practice Math in the Car

When you have a long trip to take in the car and your child asks how long until you get there, have him answer the question himself by using math. Tell him how fast you're traveling and how far away you are, and see if he can estimate how long it will take you to arrive.

Use Math in House Projects

Encourage your child to use his math skills for projects around the house. If you're wallpapering or carpeting, for example, have him calculate wall or floor areas and figure out the total cost of various materials.

Encourage Math Appreciation Through Sports

Sports provide a fun and engaging way of exploring a host of mathematical concepts, starting with basic addition. The halves of a soccer game or the quarters of a football game offer an illustration of how fractions work in the real world. If your child enjoys a sport, encourage him to explore it through math.

Encourage Music Appreciation

Music is a great way for your child to engage with concepts related to math. Practicing an instrument means learning about tempo, measure, and meter—all of which involve math.

Play Family Games

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