

Archived Information

Helping Your Child Learn Math - June 1999

Activities

Math on the Go

In this busy world, we spend a lot of time moving from place to place in our cars, on buses and trains, and on foot. Use your traveling time as an opportunity to learn about math. Look around as you travel from place to place, and help your child find numbers on buildings, buses, taxis, and houses that they can add and subtract while on the road. Not only will your child be learning and practicing math skills, but the time you spend traveling will go by more quickly as well.



Number Search

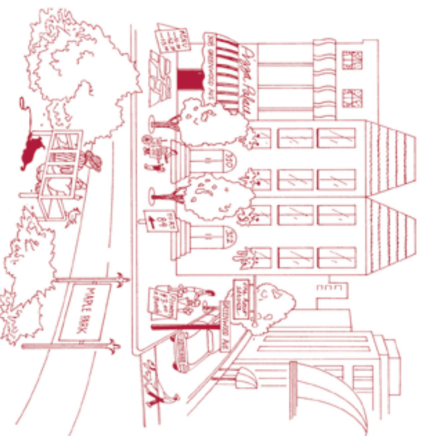
Grades K-3

What you'll need

Paper, pencil, and ruler

What to do

1. Create a chart that lists the numbers from 1 to 50.
2. Write down each number as family members locate that number on a car, a sign, a building, or other objects in your community.
3. Write down words that have numbers in them, such as "onestop shopping," "twoday service," "buy one, get one free," or "open seven days a week."



Parent Pointer

This activity provides children with lots of opportunities to practice number recognition, as well as counting and writing skills.

License Plate Special

Grades 2-5

What you'll need

License plates, paper, pencil, and ruler

What to do

1. Copy down a license plate number as you are traveling in your car, walking around the neighborhood, or sitting on a park bench watching cars go by. Read the license plate as a number (excluding the letters). For example, if the license were 663M218, the number would be six hundred and sixtythree thousand two hundred and eighteen.
2. Find other license plates and read their numbers. Is the number less than, greater than, or equal to yours?
3. Estimate the difference between your number and another license plate. Is it 10, 100, 1,000, or 10,000?
4. Record the names of the states of many different license plates as you see them. From which state do you see the most? Which has the fewest? Prepare a chart or graph to show your findings.



Parent Pointer

This license plate activity encourages reading, recognizing numbers, noticing symbols, writing, counting, and graphing.

License Plate Riddles

Grades K-5

What you'll need

License plates, paper, and pencil

What to do

1. While traveling in a car, or on a bus, everyone watches for license plates, focusing on one in particular for 5 minutes. The object is to use the digits on the license plate to make the largest 3-digit number possible. When a player chooses a license plate during the 5-minute watching period, they call out the 3-digit number they have made from the license plate. The person with the largest number wins the round. Try the next round so the winner is the person with the smallest 3-digit number.
2. Let each letter on a license plate be worth the value of its position in the alphabet. A=1, M=13, Z=26. Each person chooses a license plate and adds the value of the letters. The person with the lowest or the highest value wins the round.
3. For younger children, this activity can be simplified by having them find the largest single digit, or double digit, or even add all the numbers on the license plate, or just recognize digits.



Parent Pointer
 This game helps children to develop their knowledge of numbers and to think algebraically.

Total It

Grades 3-5

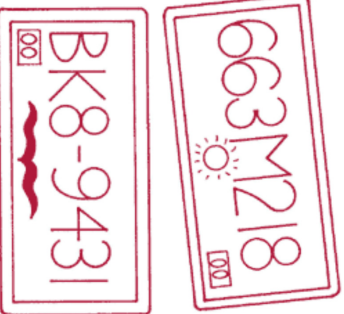
Parent Pointer
 The problem-solving and computational skills your child uses in this activity are very important to mental math skills, and they also help your child to be creative with numbers.

What you'll need

License plates, paper, pencil, and calculator

What to do

1. As you are traveling in your car, or on a bus, each person takes turns calling out a license plate number.
2. All players try to add the numbers in their heads. Talk about what strategies were used in the mental math addition. Were the numbers added by 10's like $2+8$? Were doubles like $6+6$ added?
3. Try different problems using the numbers in a license plate. For example, if you use the plate number 663M218, ask "Using the numbers on the plate, can you make 5?"
 - o 5 using two numbers? "Yes, $3+2 = 5$ "
 - o 5 using three numbers? "Yes, $(3+2) \times 1 = 5$ "
 - o 5 using four numbers? "Yes, $(6+3+1) + 2 = 5$ "
 - o 5 using five numbers? "Yes, $(6+6+3) - (8+2) = 5$ "
 - o 5 using six numbers? "Yes, $(6+6) + (3 \times 1) - (8+2) = 5$ "



Try using a calculator to play these games. See if you can solve these problems faster using the calculator.

How Long? How Far?

Grades 1-3

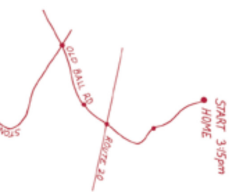
What you'll need

Information about how far you're traveling and how long it will take

What to do

Many times when you are on the go, you are headed somewhere that requires you to be there by a certain time.

1. Ask your children how far they think you have traveled and how much more you have to travel.



2. Talk about how long it takes to get to your destination. If it is 3:15 now, and it takes 45 minutes to get there, ask if you will make it for a 4:15 appointment? How much extra time will there be? Will we be late?



Parent Pointer
 This car, bus, or train traveling exercise provides many opportunities for children to use mental math and estimation to calculate time and distance problems.

Ease on Down the Road

Grades 2-5

What to do

1. A gallon of gas costs \$1.24 a gallon. What does it cost for 5 gallons? 10 gallons? 15 gallons? 20 gallons? What is an easy way to figure this out? How can you estimate the cost by rounding the cost per gallon?
2. The speed limit is 55 miles per hour. How far will you go in 1 hour? Two hours? Three hours? How long will it take to go 500 miles?
 Use a calculator to check your answers.



Parent Pointer
 An important algebra concept is finding relationships between two quantities such as miles per hour or cost per gallon.

[Math at the Grocery Store](#) [PREV](#) [UP](#) [NEXT](#) [Math for the Fun of It!](#)