

Playing games to support maths

Playing games is a really fun and easy way for parents to familiarise children with numbers and support their learning.

Maths games can make a big difference for children who don't enjoy maths, find it tricky, or lack confidence. Games don't feel like learning, so you'll probably find it's easier to get a reluctant child involved in a game, than to sit down with a worksheet.

Remember, games are for life, not just for Christmas; so make time to play regularly at home, get together with friends and family or ask the PTA or school about hosting a family maths games night or lunchtime club - you could soon see your child's confidence grow and a more positive attitude towards maths emerge.

Different types of maths games

There are all kinds of maths games that can help children learn and practise a range of skills:

- traditional board or card games
- educational maths games designed for learning
- online games and puzzles

If you think your kids will be put off by educational games, you'll probably find lots of the games they already enjoy involve maths in some way, shape or form.

You can pick up board games from charity shops and boot fairs at a fraction of the brand new cost and if your child likes to play on a tablet or laptop, there are plenty of free online options.

Traditional games that are 'undercover' maths games

Monopoly

A firm family favourite, kids use a range of maths skills in their quest to bankrupt you! Monopoly helps with counting, addition and subtraction, handling money, practising number bonds, strategy and negotiation.

Dominoes

Great for turning maths into a game because you can use them in so many ways. Traditional dominoes can help with counting, matching, recognising odd and even numbers, addition and subtraction. If your child is learning shapes, why not make your own dominoes with shapes on so they can practise recognising and matching them?

Snakes and ladders

Possibly one of the most frustrating games ever when you find yourself sliding from square 99

back down to 9! Snakes and ladders gets children counting and practising number bonds (along with a sprinkling of patience).

Four in a row (aka Connect 4)

A great game for helping children learn to predict what might come next, consider the possible patterns of play and develop strategies. Not forgetting the element of luck!

Scrabble

You might grab this one to help with spelling and vocabulary, but numbers are an important part of the game too. Addition and multiplication skills are used to keep track of scores throughout the game.

Card games

Do you remember playing card games with your grandparents? The old games like snap, patience, whist, rummy and bridge all help with maths - from early skills like recognising numbers to ten and ordering numbers, to more advanced skills like probability and prediction.

Educational maths games designed to make learning fun

Brainbox Maths

The Brainbox series of games are designed to help improve observation and memory skills. The maths version reinforces maths concepts as each card covers a maths topic including money, time, angles and fractions.

Head Full of Numbers

If you're familiar with the word-making game Boggle, this is similar, but for maths. Number cubes are shaken up, rolled out and placed in a tray. Players write down as many equations as they can make from the numbers selected using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division.

Maths bingo

Bingo is often played as a maths game in schools, so if it's a game your children enjoy, why not play it at home too? The caller has a list of maths questions related to whatever topic you want to learn, and each player has a bingo card with numbers on. Players need to solve the maths question and match the answer to their board. There are loads of free maths bingo downloads available online (try searching math bingo too!), or you could make your own.

Number Rumbler

[Number Rumbler](#) is a family card game developed with children by charity Maths on Toast.

When you play you'll be having fun, practising your times tables, and developing number sense. Learning multiplication tables is all about number facts: 2×5 is 10, for example. Number sense is about understanding how numbers relate to each other more broadly. By playing with the cards, you'll get a better sense of how the numbers relate to one another.

If your kids love playing educational games, Orchard Games and The Early Learning Centre make loads of them! They have a big selection of maths games that help with counting, numbers, shapes and colours, matching, memory and more.

Free online maths games

Schools often use online games as part of the children's learning, so your child's teacher will probably be able to recommend some that link into what they're currently teaching or that they think will particularly benefit your child. There's plenty available without paying a subscription.

BBC bitesize

Children can count, add, subtract, multiply and divide their way to victory in a range of fun, quality online games sorted by learning stage and topic.

Maths is fun

Choose from a selection of maths games that includes some traditional offline games in an online format, like 4 in a row, chess and darts!

Top marks maths

There are lots of easy to play games sorted by age range and maths category on the top marks maths website.

Have we missed your favourite maths game or 'undercover' maths game? Let us know and we'll add it to the list, email editorial@parentkind.org.uk.

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