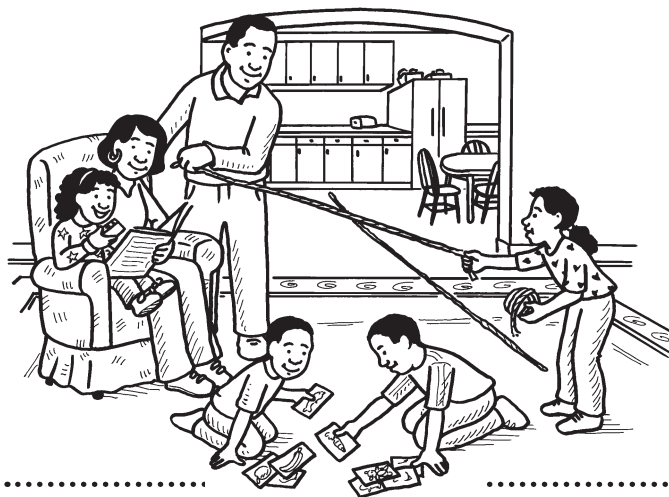


Reading, Writing, & Math



Your child reads, writes, and does math in school every day. What if you could help her do better in all of those subjects by enjoying activities together at home? With this guide, you can! Try these 10 ideas to boost her skills while sharing quality time.

Reading

Story box

Here's a creative way to act out stories—and increase your youngster's understanding of them.



Read a story together, and let your child decorate a shoe box to match the setting. If it takes place in a city, she could

line the inside of the box with blue construction paper and glue on construction-paper buildings with squares of aluminum foil for windows. Suggest that she add toy animals or people for the book's characters.

Encourage your youngster to retell the story to you. She might move the toys around and use different voices to say lines from the book.

Almanac game

Play this almanac game to build your child's knowledge of history, geography, and other subjects.

Shuffle a deck of cards (ace–9 only, ace = 1), and stack them facedown. On your turn, draw two cards (say, ace and 7), and make them into a two-digit number (17 or 71). Open a children's almanac to that page, and have each player read it silently. Then, the person who drew the cards takes the almanac and asks each player a question using information on the

page. Examples: "What is the capital of Maine?" "When did the Gold Rush begin?"

Everyone who gets a correct answer scores a point. If anyone gives the wrong answer, the person who asked the question gets his point! After every player has a turn drawing cards, the high score wins.

Audio book library

Make a priceless collection of audio books by recording your youngster—and other family members—reading her favorite books.

Ask your child to pick a book and practice reading it. When she can read it with expression and at a good pace, help her record herself.

Also, record yourself reading bedtime stories to her, and ask grandparents, aunts, and uncles to make audio books when they visit. Now your youngster can enjoy story time with her favorite people, even when they're at work or out of town.

Writing

Family comic strip

Every family has funny tales they love to tell. Pick one that makes your family laugh, and turn it into a comic strip.

Maybe your suds-covered dog once escaped during a bath and ran around the house while you chased him. Let everyone pick a part of the story to write and illustrate. Each person can draw his panel on a sheet of paper (stick figures are fine!) and add dialogue. ("Come back here, Roger!")

Have your child glue the panels in order onto poster board and hang the comic strip somewhere for everyone to enjoy.





Rock-hunt poetry

Anyone can be a poet with this clever outdoor activity. Ask your youngster to search for rocks big enough to write words on with chalk. Encourage him to write a variety of nouns (*pizza, truck*), verbs (*jumped, flew*), and adjectives (*huge, blue*). He might also make a few rocks with common words like *the, and, a*, and *is*. Now your child can arrange the word rocks into a poem. Have him read his verse aloud and move the rocks around until he's happy with it. Then, he could copy his poem onto paper so he'll have it to keep.

Trading cards

Designing trading cards can give your youngster experience doing research and writing nonfiction. Let your child choose a category like animals, vehicles, or food. Each family member can make at least three trading cards to fit the category. For animals, your youngster might create cards for a koala, an otter, and a dolphin. She could find facts about them in library books or online (try *kids.nationalgeographic.com* or *kids.sandiegozoo.org*). Then, she can write details on one side of each card and draw a picture of the animal on the other. Read each other's cards—and trade to collect the ones you like best!

Math

Yarn measurement

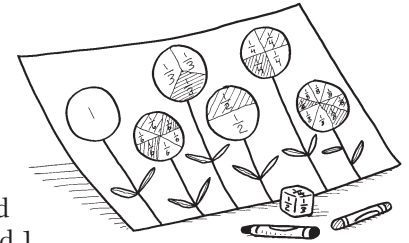
Your child can have a ball with this estimation challenge. Ask your youngster to stand somewhere in your house and name a spot she can see. For instance, she might stand by a kitchen chair and “spot” the refrigerator. Then, she should cut a length of yarn that she thinks will reach it. To check her estimate, she can lay down the yarn. How close did she come? Next, let her pick other distances, estimate, and check. As she practices, her estimation skills will improve.

Number of the day

“Good morning! What’s today’s number?” Start each day with a new number, and find creative ways to use it. Give your child 10 craft sticks, and ask him to write a number (1–100) on each. Put the sticks in a cup, and every morning, he can pull one out to select the number of the day. Then, hold a contest to see who can find it the most times that day, and keep a running count. Road signs, food packages, and clocks, for instance, are great places to find numbers. Or use the number for activities and projects. For 27, play basketball until one team scores 27 points. Or for 63, make a mosaic with 63 tiny squares of construction paper.

Fraction flowers

Try to be the first player to color in all the (fractional) petals of your flower! First, cover a die with masking tape squares, and label them $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{6}$, $\frac{1}{8}$, and 1. Next, have each player trace around a cup on paper to make six circles (“flowers”). Leave one flower whole, and draw lines to divide the others into halves, thirds, fourths, sixths, and eighths. Write the fraction you’ve made on each section (example: $\frac{1}{6}$ on each “petal” of the flower with 6 sections). On your turn, roll the die, and color in a matching fraction. If no matching fractions are left, try looking for *equivalent* ones. For instance, roll $\frac{1}{2}$, and color $\frac{2}{4}$ (since $\frac{2}{4} = \frac{1}{2}$). The first one to color in all her flowers wins.



Flip, slide, turn

This stuffed animal game can help your youngster learn about flips (reflections), slides (translations), and turns (rotations) in geometry. Here’s how. Start at one side of a room, and take turns shouting “flip,” “slide,” or “turn.” Each player moves his stuffed animal according to the direction given. A flip is a mirror image—your child could move his animal from its feet to its head or from its back to its stomach. For a slide, simply slide the animal forward one length (so its head is where its feet were). And for a turn, a player should rotate his stuffed animal 90 degrees. The first stuffed animal to reach the opposite side of the room gets first prize!