

This is an excerpt from a larger article I wrote for The Metuchen Mirror.

Here are some ideas for parents about how to easily include fun math activities into their routine during the summer months, back to school, or anytime!

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There are fun and easy real world, every day type activities that help to reinforce students' math skills. Although these ideas require a small amount of effort, the positive payback may be potentially impressive. Research suggests that including meaningful math into an everyday routine helps to reinforce its relevance to children. It may also contribute to minimizing anxious feelings about succeeding in Math in school by helping to create a more solid foundation through relaxed goal setting and engagement. As students meet with success and achieve informally through play, they have the opportunity to view math positively, understand its value and importance, and foster an enduring love for mathematics.

Traditionally interactive games, like jump rope and hopscotch, offer endless opportunities to reinforce various counting skills for young children. For hopscotch, try using skip counting by 2's, 5's or 10's, when creating the board. For example, a skip counting hopscotch board by 2's would be 2, 4, 6, 8, 10..., skip counting board by 5's would be 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30...and skip counting by 10's would involve counting up by 10's. For jump rope, try keeping a running total by adding the number of jumps for each player's turn with the goal of 100. Or, for both games, have your child begin with a score of 100 and subtract the points or number of hops or jumps earned during each turn, with the goal of reaching zero first.

Carpooling to an extracurricular activity? Ask the kids in the car to estimate about how much time it will take to travel from one place to another. Have the children check the time with a watch. Practice telling time is always a helpful everyday skill! Also, use this opportunity to discuss over and under estimates. Having a practical understanding of estimation will help reinforce school-based math skills which involve applying estimation to number operations and problem solving. The round ends when the passenger in the car who comes closest to the travel time without an exact answer and earns a point. This game can be modified to include exact times as a winning option. This is also a great opportunity to discuss the difference between exact and estimated answers. Most points after all the rounds wins the game!

With little preparation involved, these are a few fun and easy ideas for children to add to any routine. Enjoy & remember to... own your math and make it real!

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