Summertime really begins in the classroom for most children. Daydreams of warm summer sunshine, cool blue swimming pools and neighborhood games invade children’s thoughts as soon as the last bits of winter frost melt away. As days become longer and the spring months pass, math class becomes a distant memory.

This year summer came early for our children, but it doesn’t look like summers of the past. Due to COVID-19 we moved out of the classroom, scrambled to set up online learning and finished out the school year at home. Summer enrichment is on hold and practicing math is the last thing on our minds. However, don’t bring out the flash cards yet, the following activities can help you provide plenty of practice and teachable math moments this summer.

**Play a game.**

**Monopoly, Chess, and Chutes and Ladders.**

Games like Monopoly and Payday require some math ability and promote “mental math.” Encourage your child to be the banker and perform the calculations in her head, not on paper. For younger children, Chutes and Ladders teaches counting and skip counting. Chess provides a great way for older children to observe geometry and patterns, and an old-fashioned game of Dominoes, or card games such as Cribbage or Canasta, also provide good math practice. Finally, there are many free online math games for children you can discover through a well worded internet search.
Cook a meal.

Cakes, cupcakes and other recipes.
Cooking often involves a great deal of math. Beyond measuring, cooking also presents problems of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of whole numbers and fractions. For younger children, simply measuring and learning about fractions of a cup, for instance, is a lesson itself. For older children, a favorite recipe doubled or halved provides a fairly complex math lesson. For example, find your favorite cookie recipe and ask the child to double all the ingredients to make two batches. If the recipe calls for \( \frac{1}{4} \) cup of shortening, ask the child to add \( \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} \) or multiply \( \frac{1}{4} \times 2 \), both of which equal \( \frac{2}{4} \) or \( \frac{1}{2} \), to find out how much shortening will be needed.

Plant a garden.

Tomatoes, flowers and herbs.
Have your child measure the area to be planted, draw it on graphing paper (if he would like), and after choosing the plants, calculate how many plants can be planted there. The child will need to calculate the area of the garden (Area = length x width), the space between rows, and the space between plants within the rows. After the plants have grown, produce can be counted, weighed and measured and the child can learn to estimate yields.

Plan a trip.

East, west, north or south.
The current health concerns may keep you from traveling; however, it is always safe to take a virtual trip. Use a map if you have one or work from an online map. Find a destination across town, across the state, or across the country, if you are really ambitious. Ask your child to be a navigator for the day. Have the navigator calculate the distance for the total trip and the distance between destinations. For older children, ask them to estimate how long it will take to get from one location to another. As you might be able to tell, this activity could become quite sophisticated, so be sure you are up on your math. My son showed me up when I tried this one and “schooled” me on distance and rate (distance = rate x time). Hint: Be sure to use miles per hour for rate and the number of hours for time; it will save you a lecture.
Strengthening Your Child’s Math Skills Over the Summer

Shop online.

**Budgets, taxes and saving goals.**

Summer is often a time of increased chores; therefore, some children are making a little more allowance than usual. Have your child create his own budget with spending guidelines and saving goals. Involve him in planning the household budget to encourage questions and powerful teaching moments. When shopping, encourage your child to help add up the bill. Ask him to figure out discounts and sales tax. Play “beat the cash register” to see how fast your child can figure out the cost of items in your cart.

**Any moment can be a teaching moment.**

During this pandemic, take advantage of increased time together and realize that any moment can be a teaching moment. Between activities, spend some time doing everyday things which allow your child to experience the math that is all around her every day. You might just turn your child into a mathematician!

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