

Helping your children with – Mental Calculations

Most calculations that we carry out each day, we do in our heads. Travelling, sharing a bill, shopping, playing or watching a sport and preparing a meal all involve mental calculations. The methods that we use when we work things out in our heads are often not the same methods that we use when we write down a sum.

So how do children learn to do mental calculations?

Children begin by counting things that they can see, and using objects to add and subtract. Through practice, children will begin to think of ways to add and subtract without having to use objects.

What can you do at home?

- Ask your child how he or she mentally works out the answer to a question. Explain how you would mentally work out the answer. If your child can not work out the answer mentally, given him or her objects to use for counting.
- Ask your child to work out how much change he or she will get when paying for an item at the shop.
- If your child is saving to buy an item, ask how much more money he or she will need to save before being able to buy it.
- Encourage your child to estimate the cost of two items when shopping.
- When playing games that use two dice, ask your child to work out mentally the difference in scores.
- Involve your child in working out costs associated with holiday travel.

