6 Smart Ways to Make Math Fun for your Child

Nobody really enjoys homework, particularly when it's something as tricky as math. M&B shows you some ingenious ways to make your child fall in love with the subject

BY **ARUNDHATI NATH**

Mathematics is an interesting subject if it's understood well. However, as children grow up, they tend to develop a fear for the subject, owing to their difficulty to understand the concepts. To make matters worse, many parents seem to sympathise with their children by saying that they too were weak at math during their school days. This automatically has an effect on children, further deepening their fears, making them believe that math is indeed a monster in disguise! But, this is what you can do to encourage a healthy affiliation for the subject, and make it a fun thing at the same time:

Don't make it look scary: The first step parents must take is to stop telling their kids that math is a scary subject. Children imitate and learn from their parents. If they are told that a particular subject is tough, they will believe the parent or teacher, and will lose confidence in their own abilities and stop trying to understand the concepts. Instead, tell the child that math is an interesting subject and is very essential in our day to day lives. In short, ease the tension around the subject early on.

Make indoor games fun: Chaitali Pal Chowdhury runs a franchise, iMaths, which is a concept-based Math class. She uses games, puzzles, stories, etc., to teach concepts of math. "Games such

as Snakes and Ladders can be used for number recognition, skip counting and direction.
I have used the game of Musical chairs to teach the concept of patterns, where I kept changing the arrangement of chairs so the kids realised that various patterns were present in the arrangements. I have held races to teach number bonds," Chaitali says. The art of paper folding or Origami, can also be used as a fun way to learn about shapes, symmetry and patterns.

Encourage him to ask questions: Priya Asthana, founder of Maths2art, mentions on her blog that she feels happy when her students get inquisitive and asks questions. Recently, one of her Primary four students asked her a question on multiplication. The question was: Why do we place a zero in the second row of multiplication if we multiply 33 by 22? Priya answered the question in the following way: When we multiply 33 by two (units place), the answer is 66. But when we multiply 33 by the other two (tens place) we are actually multiplying it by 20. Hence, we need a zero in the second row. Encourage your child to be inquisitive. Try to answer his questions as best as you can. Take the help of teachers or the internet to make the concepts clear to him.

Give him a piggy bank: A piggy bank not only teaches the concepts of math, but is a great tool to introduce the habit of saving and investing, and helps in building financial literacy. Ask him to keep a small notebook to add up the amounts he has deposited into the piggy bank each week. You can give him a few extra rupees when he has more than a hundred rupees in a month, for example. This is the basis of the concept of earning interest on bank deposits.

Make math a part of everyday life: When you go shopping with your kiddo, ask him to count the apples or oranges in the basket. Tell him that your budget for the day's shopping is ₹1,000. After you've selected your groceries, let him calculate if the price of the total items is below or above ₹1,000. This is a great way to teach him budgeting too. You can give him a calculator if he is too young to add or subtract on his own. He will still get the drift of math. Alternatively, the next time you are at the petrol station, ask your child to look at the display metre. Tell him that a thousand millilitres make a litre and a thousand litres make a kilolitre. You can teach him the concepts of distance, speed and time when you go on a long drive.

Be Game: Divesh Bathija is the Founder of Dinasim learning. It is a startup which aims to make math fun for children, with the help of games like soccer, volleyball or football. For example, in the game of soccer he teaches kids to understand fractions by doing penalty shootouts. When you have this penalty shootout, the child can be given different number of chances like five chances or four chances. Whatever success rate he gets, for example, if he scores two goals out of four, the fraction here is 2/4 or if he scores one goal out of five then the fraction is 1/5. This allows him to check his penalty shootout and then when he has to compare, he will have to use least common multiples (LCM), since the denominators are different. And thus children start to realise how LCM is an important factor. As frustrating as the subject may seem, a little encouragement and positive reinforcement, can help your child warm up to the subject. MB