



6 Tried and Tested Strategies to Teach Multiplication to Kids

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For many parents, the thought of teaching our children multiplication can seem like quite a daunting task. In the past, most of us have learned the skill by memorizing multiplication tables and being drilled over and over again with a huge number of problems, all while being timed. It's no wonder why just the thought of teaching it to our kids can seem nerve-wracking! If you're stressing about how to teach multiplication to kids, let's take a step back, discover how it's done today before taking a look at engaging activities and games your child can play to master this necessary math milestone.



But believe it or not, kids today begin building multiplication skills long before they ever step foot in a third-grade classroom. While early learners are busy mastering counting, place value, addition and subtraction between preschool and 3rd grade, they are sequentially laying the foundation for more advanced math operations, like multiplication and division. Fortunately, the days of rote memorization and drilling are long gone.

Acquisition of Multiplication Skills

As alluded to above, the way kids learn math is vastly different than it was when the parents of today were in the classroom. Pedagogy has changed over the years, and teaching theories have come and gone, just like anything else. Most notably, since the Common Core Standards Initiative in 2010, educators across the country turned from more traditional practices of teaching math to a more conceptual method of teaching. That means that researchers and teachers understand the value of teaching our kids to actually understand the math concepts behind the problems they solve.



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As a result, instead of purely memorizing operations and then “drilling and killing”, as was once the practice in math classrooms, kids don’t just learn “the how” when it comes to math problems, but also “the why”. Researchers have noted that when kids have a solid understanding of numeracy, kids are much more likely to be successful in math, especially as they advance throughout their school careers and lives.

In classrooms today, kids now build their number sense and the understanding of math operations one step at a time, starting counting and place value. By the time kids are skip counting and adding doubles, they have already formed the foundation they need to understand the process of multiplication. In this way, students acquire the skills to multiply long before they see a multiplication problem on a worksheet! Below you’ll find

ideas to introduce this higher-level operation with your child for both single and multi-digit multiplication:

Single Digit Multiplication

Using Real Life Examples and Pictures to Illustrate

One of the best ways to introduce multiplication to early learners is to start by simply giving examples of real life examples, and drawing pictures to represent them. Since kids are now learning math in a more conceptual way, it's important that kids can connect the math problems they solve to real life, and actually see the concepts in action.



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To get started, get a piece of paper and a few crayons. Tell your child to draw three ice cream cones, each with three scoops. Next, read your child the following word problem: "Little Bobby bought three ice cream cones. Each ice cream cone has three scoops of ice cream. How many scoops are there in all?" Go ahead and have your child count the ice cream cones and write down the answer. Then, explain that the problem is actually a multiplication problem, and write out the equation at the top of the page: $3 \times 3 = 9$.

Using the above strategy, continue making similar problems, with new, easy-to-draw pictures your child can easily draw out and count. For instance, draw slices of pizza with pepperoni, kites with ribbons, or cars with tires. Keep practicing until your child understands the concept!

Review Adding Doubles and Begin Writing Problems!


Kids learn to add doubles starting in the first grade. Since this concept is already so familiar for kids, it makes the most sense to start here when beginning multiplication in 3rd grade. Start with writing multiplication problems that focus on only multiplying by 2. Explain that multiplying a number doubles the number, and ask them to recall their knowledge of adding doubles.

In addition, word problems help kids to pick out the numbers and write the multiplication sentence themselves before solving it. Encourage your child to keep drawing out the problems they complete. If your child struggles to solve the problem before they draw it out, help your him or her to draw the picture first, and count. Focus on only multiplying by 2 for as long as necessary before moving on to multiplying by any other number or learning multiplication facts. Move on when your child seems to have mastered multiplying by 2!

Word Problems Make Multiplication Make More Sense

When starting out with multiplication, it doesn't make sense giving a child a worksheet filled with problems without the conceptual understanding behind the process itself. Word problems are the best way for kids to make sense out of early multiplication concepts, and help kids relate to the operation in a realistic way.

TWO STEP WORD PROBLEMS



Multiplication and Division: Two-Step Word Problems

Solve these two-step word problems and check the correct answer.

Serena and her siblings eat 2 packets of crackers a day. Each packet has 10 crackers. How many crackers do Serena and her siblings eat in 3 days?

20	60
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30	50
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Serena makes dresses for her dolls. She makes 3 dresses a day. She adds 2 buttons onto each dress she makes. How many buttons will she add in 4 days?

12	42
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	36
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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After printing out a worksheet with simple single-digit word problems, make sure to read through the entire problem carefully. Use colored pencils to underline key words in a

problem, and then go back to circle any numbers needed for the problem. Next, rewrite the multiplication problem in the form of a multiplication sentence and solve.

Don't Forget the Zero Rule!

The multiplication product of zero is a universal math rule that states that when one of the factors in a multiplication problem is zero, the product is zero, too. Teaching this concept early on is a no brainer for kids, especially when teaching multiplication to struggling students. It offers kids a quick and easy way to solve any multiplication problem that includes a zero. In fact, why not listen to catchy song to ensure that your child remembers the rule? Check out Jack Hartmann Kid's Music Channel on YouTube and watch "Multiply by 0" with your child and sing along!

You might be wondering when kids start learning or memorizing more multiplication facts. Once kids understand the concept of multiplication, it's time to start learning the rules and facts before advancing on to multi-digit multiplication.

Multi-Digit Multiplication

Once you feel that your child has mastered the concept behind multiplication and is successful at completing simple one-digit problems, it's finally time to move on to learning multi-digit multiplication. While multi-digit multiplication is indeed more complicated, there are a few strategies you can use to start that will help any child conquer these seemingly tough problems.

Multiplying Partial Factors by Breaking Them Up

Every adult uses mental math from time to time to solve problems in the real world. One strategy that most of us use is breaking up factors to make solving problems easier. Here's an example: the problem on the paper says 12×20 . Let's break up the factors into numbers that we are able to work with in our minds. Most of us can work with the number 10.

Multiply 10 times 20 separately before multiplying 2 by 20 and then adding the two products. On paper it would look more like this:

$$(10 \times 20) + (2 \times 20) =$$

This is much easier to solve!

The Adding Zeros Trick

When multiplying by 10, 100, or 1000, or even when multiplying multiples of these same numbers, one can simply add zeros to solve the problem. For instance, when multiplying 35×100 , the place value increases by two zeros, making the product equal 3500. By

merely adding the number of zeros contained within 100 factor, the answer is easy to find.

That said, before tackling this concept, it's important that kids have a solid understanding of place value. They must understand the math behind the trick. If you're confident that your child knows why adding zeros works, go ahead and introduce the trick to make multiplication easier when dealing with factors that have multiple zeros. To help reinforce the concept itself, log on to YouTube and search for the popular Schoolhouse Rock song, "My Hero, Zero" and sing along with a childhood favorite song that you might even remember from your own childhood!

Obviously, there are many more strategies to help your early learner master the tough concept of multiplication! If you're struggling to get started and wondering how to teach multiplication to kids, the strategies above will come in handy in the early stages. Once your child understands the concept behind the math, solving problems will become easier, and more advanced strategies can be applied.

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