

# Parent **TIP** Sheet

## Help your teen improve math skills

*Helping your child with math is easier than you may think. Even if you didn't enjoy math in school and don't think you're an expert in math, the good news is you can do many things to help your teen improve his or her math skills. This tip sheet gives you ideas about how to get started.*

### Keep a positive attitude

Many adults grew up with the idea that some students were good at math and others weren't and that there wasn't anything you could do about it. You may not have enjoyed math in school, and you may certainly be bewildered by today's new high school math curriculum.

But it's important for you to keep a positive attitude about your teen's ability to succeed in math. We know that all students can learn math skills, just like all students can learn to read and write. When you talk to your teen, stay positive about the importance of developing strong math skills. Express your confidence that your teen can improve in math with hard work and encouragement.

### Help your teen get organized for learning

- Help your teen set realistic short-term and long-term goals for improvement in math.
- Make sure your teen keeps a healthy balance between schoolwork and other activities such as sports, clubs, friends and part-time work. Help your teen set priorities for the extracurricular activities, to make sure there is enough time for homework.
- Help your teen to keep organized. Encourage the use of a journal or daytimer to record school assignments, homework and tests.
- Encourage your teen to take responsibility for his learning. Improvement in math skills will take hard work.

- Pay attention to the "learning skills" section of the report card. If your teen has difficulty working independently, for example, you can help her improve this skill, and it will have a positive impact on her schoolwork in math.

### Make good use of school resources

If your teen has difficulty with math, it's important to ask for help, and the school is your first stop to get help. Make sure your teen is using all the resources available in the school and the Peel board before you go to external, private sources. Speak with your teen's math teacher to find out what extra help is available.

Another program, called *Counting On You*, provides students with a unique opportunity to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

The program runs after school, in the evening or on weekends and offers up to 30 hours of remedial help in reading, writing and math. It's intended for students who may need extra support to meet the expectations of the new curriculum. For more information, call 905-890-1010 (or 1-800-668-1146) ext. 2538.

### Talking to your teen can help with math

You don't have to be an expert in math to help your teen—all you have to do is make time to talk about math together:

- Ask your teen what he is learning in math. Ask him to explain some of the math concepts he is learning right now.

Encourage him to use correct math vocabulary. The process of explaining it to you will help him to consolidate what he has learned.

- Look at assignments and tests that have been marked and returned to your teen. Ask her to explain some of the questions and how she solved them. Ask her what she's learned from getting the marked assignment or test back.

### Help your teen get the most benefit from homework

Homework is designed to help your teen learn. Here are some ways you can help your teen get the most learning benefit from the time spent doing homework.

- Encourage your teen to have a regular time of day to do homework—before he is too tired.
- Ask your teen what math homework she has each day. Many schools have homework assignments posted on the school web site or on a voice mail line, so you can find out what homework is assigned for your teen's class.
- Encourage your teen to do extra work on days when there is no math homework. For example, review math vocabulary and do practice math questions.
- To practice math communication skills, encourage your teen each week to write a summary of what he learned in math this week. Use correct math vocabulary.
- Make sure your teen spends enough time doing math homework. To improve her skills, your teen should spend at least 30 to 60 minutes each day on math homework or on extra math practice.
- Check to make sure that your teen has done all the math homework. Ask if he has tried to answer every question and *all parts* of each question.

### What to do if your teen is having difficulty

If your teen is stuck on a particular question or problem, you can help even if you don't know how to answer the question yourself:

- Read the question out loud to her.
- Ask her how she would break the problem down into parts.

- Ask her to think about questions or assignments she's done before that look like this.
- Encourage her to go back to her textbook or notebook and re-read the explanation and examples.
- It's important for you to know that there isn't one "right way" to solve the problem—if one approach isn't working, encourage your teen to come at the problem in a different way.

Encourage your teen to try every question. Even if he's not sure whether he's solving a problem correctly, he'll learn from trying to solve it and from showing his work—the problem solving approach he used.

### Look for other sources to get help

There are many other places for you and your teen to get help in learning math. Here are just a few examples:

- The Peel board has *homework help information* at [www.peelschools.org/students](http://www.peelschools.org/students).
- There are other web sites that offer math homework help. For example:
  - the Ministry of Education web site at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca) has all the high school math curriculum
  - ~~[www.tvo.org/eureka](http://www.tvo.org/eureka)~~ lets you "Ask a Teacher"
  - [www.purplemath.com](http://www.purplemath.com) offers a wide range of lessons and tutorials
  - the EQAO web site at [www.eqao.com](http://www.eqao.com) gives you information about the provincial math testing, complete with sample test questions
- There are community agencies that offer homework help and homework clubs. Check with your family, friends or neighbours to find out about ones nearest your home.

### Find more ideas on Peel board web site

Go to [www.peelschools.org](http://www.peelschools.org) and subscribe to receive a calendar with daily learning activities you and your teen can do together.