



FREE PARENT GUIDE

How to Help With Maths Homework (Even If You Don't Know the Method)

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By Ibrahim, maths tutor since 2018 · Updated October 2026

You do not need to know the maths to make a real difference. Your job is not to teach the method. It is to help your child think, keep going and ask for help in the right way. Here is how.

Be the Coach, Not the Teacher

Schools often teach methods that are different from the ones parents learnt, such as the "bus stop" method for division or grid methods for multiplying. Showing your child a different method can confuse them, even if yours is right. Instead, help them use the method they were taught.

Set Up a Good Routine

- Pick the same time on homework days, so it becomes a habit rather than a battle.
- Use a table, not a bed or sofa, with the phone in another room.
- Keep sessions to 20 to 30 minutes, then take a short break.
- Have the right kit ready: pencil, ruler, rubber, protractor and a scientific calculator.

Six Questions You Can Ask Without Knowing the Maths

1 What Is the Question Asking You to Find?

Get them to say it in their own words. Many mistakes come from answering the wrong question.

2 What Information Have You Been Given?

Underlining the numbers and key words helps them see what they are working with.

3 Is There a Similar Example in Your Book or Notes?

Most homework practises something from that week's lessons.

4 What Have You Tried So Far?

This shows you where they are stuck, and shows them they have already started.

5 Can You Explain That Step to Me?

Explaining out loud often helps a child spot their own mistake.

6 Does Your Answer Make Sense?

A bus fare of £400 or a person 15 metres tall is a clue that something has gone wrong.

When Your Child Is Stuck

Use the **10-minute rule**. If your child has been stuck on one question for 10 minutes, it is time to move on. Ask them to write a short note next to it, such as "I got stuck when I had to divide by the fraction". This is far more useful to the teacher than a blank space or an answer copied from the internet.

Most schools use an online homework platform, such as Sparx Maths, MathsWatch or DrFrost. Most of these have a short help video for each task. Watching the video together is a good first step when your child is stuck.

Watch Your Words

Instead of...	Try...
"I was never any good at maths either."	"This is tricky. Let's work it out together."
"That's wrong."	"Talk me through how you got that."
"It's easy, just..."	"Which part is the hard bit?"
"You're just not a maths person."	"You can't do it yet. Let's find out what to practise."

Children pick up our feelings about maths very quickly. Treating mistakes as information, rather than failure, is one of the most powerful things a parent can do.

Check Their Work, Don't Do It for Them

It is tempting to fix the answers so the homework looks good. Try not to. Teachers set homework to find out what your child can do on their own. If the homework is always right but test results are low, the teacher cannot see the problem.

When to Talk to the Teacher

- Homework regularly takes much longer than it should, or ends in tears.
- Your child says they do not understand what is happening in lessons.
- The same topic keeps coming up and causing problems.
- Your child has stopped handing homework in.

What You Can Do This Week

- Agree a regular homework time with your child.
- Try two of the six questions during the next homework.
- Ask your child to show you their online homework platform and how its help videos work.
- Notice one thing your child did well, and tell them.

Want Help With Maths at Home?

Book a free 90-minute online lesson. I'll find exactly where your child is and what to do next.

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