



## LEARNING NUMBER FACTS (including times tables) WITH CHILDREN

Children need to know some number facts by heart in order to become proficient in maths. The children will be taught methods to work out number bonds and times table facts too, but this is no substitute for the immediate recall of facts gained from rote learning.

**The most important number facts for children to learn are their number bonds to 10.** Until a child knows these by heart they will struggle with most mental calculations. Children should be secure on number bonds to 10 and 20 before they begin to learn their times tables.

The most effective way to learn number facts is to take the 'little and often' approach – a couple of minutes in the car/GPs waiting room (the other patients might learn something too).

For number bonds:

The children will be taught how to calculate number bonds to 10 and 20 in class, using a variety of resources (including fingers and counters). At home they need to practice them so that they can instantly give the number bond to any number you give them.

Repetition is key when recalling number bonds with your child. It is best to start off with one that you are confident they know, and keep repeating those they might get incorrect. A typical verbal session might go something like this:

You say	Your child says
5	5
5	5
10	0 (zero)
7	4 (encourage child to work out correct answer as 3)
7	3
5	5
7	3

5	5
10	0 (zero)
7	3
7	3
3	7
6	4
4	8 (demonstrate that 6+4 has to be the same as 4+6)
4	6
4	6
6	4
5	5
7	3
4	6
5	5
7	3

By using this method you are constantly reinforcing the facts the child already knows whilst practising those they are less sure of.

Making it fun:

- Your child responds in the same voice you use to say your number – this could be a squeaky voice, a shout, a whisper, singing etc
- Have a set each of magnetic/foam numbers for the fridge/bath. You stick up the numbers in your set – your child puts the number bond by each number
- Time me – use a timer to see how many questions your child can answer correctly in, say, 30 seconds; then you have a go – your child has to decide if your answers are correct or not.
- There are many apps/online games to practice number bonds

For times tables:

The children will be taught about multiplication at school before learning times tables. Again it is important that tables are learnt by heart with immediate recall of answers, rather than being given time to work out the answer. We teach tables up to 12 times.

It is best to learn times tables using a rhythm – either footsteps whilst out walking, or tapping or clapping indoors. A good starting place for a table relatively new to the child is to go for a walk round the block and repeat the table adding one more number fact each time. It is easiest for children if you don't say the words times or equals as it is easier to keep in the rhythm that way.

ie. one seven is seven

one seven is seven  
two sevens are fourteen

one seven is seven  
two sevens are fourteen  
three sevens are twenty one

one seven is seven  
two sevens are fourteen  
three sevens are twenty one  
four sevens are twenty eight

etc

It is amazing how quickly most children will be able to recite a table. When they can, you should adopt a random questioning approach, following the advice given in the number bonds section ie. Keep repeating both facts they know easily and those they find more difficult – and keep the rhythm going. When you ask your child a random times table question **it is vital that they repeat the question and the answer back to you** ie:

You: three sevens

Your child: three sevens are twenty-one

That way the child associates the question with the answer in their brain and it does tend to stick.

Another effective way of learning a table is to write the table out, quite large, with the answers there, on a piece of paper. Ask your child to read the table from top to bottom and then from bottom straight back up again – easy enough as the answers are written out for them. Then ask your child which of those times table facts they already know – they will probably go for 1x, 2x and 10x and maybe even 5x – cover up the answers (not the questions) for these by either scribbling them out or covering them with card. Then ask your child to read down and up the table again, putting in the missing answers. Next ask the child which of the answers they think they can remember next, cover it up and repeat. Before too long your child will be reading the times table down and up with no answers left on the paper, but all the answers in their brain. This method works particularly well for those children who get confused about where they are in the table as they can point to the questions to keep their thoughts in order.

## Making it fun

- There are lots of great apps and internet games which promote times table skills
- 'Race Me' – print a sheet of paper with a lot of times table questions on it. Who can get furthest through the sheet with 100% accuracy in 1 minute?
- If a child stumbles on a particular times table fact send them to the bottom of the garden to yell it at the top of their voice 10 times, or whisper it, or sing it
- Remember little and often – we don't want it to become boring until 12x12 has been mastered.