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This is the first job of this IT pilot fish out of college, and the company in which he works has just hired a new vice president of sales and marketing from a major computer supplier . To motivate us and make a big splash, he T-shirts made that said: 5280'1 at the front, and Go Extra Mile! On the back, says the fish. We all got one at an all-hands meeting. There, in front of 130 of my peers and managers, I pointed out, '5,280 is the number of feet per mile, so actually, this shirt says: Go extra leg! Dead silence from my peers, after a collective sigh at my courage to point out the obvious . The new vice president laughed: I'm from marketing! We can't do math! Fortunately, everyone else laughed with him. Do the math with Sharkey. Send me your true history of IT life in sharky@computerworld.com. One story equals one posh shark shirt if I use it. Comment on today's tale in Google's Sharky community, and read thousands of great old tales in Sharkives.Get your daily dose of out-takes from the IT theater Absurd delivered directly to your inbox. Sign up now for the shark's daily newsletter. Copyright © 2017 IDG Communications, Inc. Content created by the Digital Communications Division (DCD) Content was last reviewed on October 28, 2014. Young children naturally love to take, sort, do puzzles, and discover patterns. But once these activities get labeled as math, with daily doses of addition, multiplication, fractions and long-term division, many children lose confidence and interest. Standardized math tests that start in fourth grade simply add to the problem, experts say. To make sure they are ready, schools tend to acquaint students with complex problems before they have mastered the basics. Unsurprisingly, many find the issue frustrating - or that math scores among children in the United States have declined compared to students in other countries. It's important that young kids have math savvy so they don't get intimidated when the curriculum accelerates and becomes more challenging, says Patricia Clark Kenschaft, Ph.D., author of Mathematics Power: How to Help Your Child Love Math, even if you don't. To make sure this happens, don't schedule daily half-hour exercises that will simply turn off the baby. Instead, find ways to make it fun. To improve the math skills of her 8-year-old son Jake, Beth Brody, a mom from Stockton, Utah has his range of things that he would like to buy in catalogs. When he's finished, she asks him to add up the total cost. Jake's task? To find out what items he has to remove from his wish list to get below \$100. Give it a shot! You can even let your child use the calculator - even if he doesn't supplement himself, you still have mathematical literacy. To enhance your child's cash skills, create a fake shop that sells some of her favorite things. Give her a budget and some real money to spend (you want to find out the relative value of coins and bills too). Set the prices and if you want to make it even more interesting throw some coupons into the mix. Challenge her to stay within budget while shopping. When she's done, swap places and let her be a cashier. Kitchen tools provide an excellent opportunity to teach your child about fractions. Ask your junior chef for help with dinner, but instead of scooping out a cup of rice, show him how three one-third cups equal one cup. Use a measuring cup to explain that three-eighths are less than half, even if it sounds like more. Showing him how to follow recipes will also help with mathematical literacy - and feeling comfortable with numbers will help make abstract concepts more specific. Explaining how to say time gives your child more than just a life skill. He also gets his participation with the addition, subtraction, and faction. Make sure you have at least one hour in the house that is not digital. Turn the practice into a game: call once - ask your child to move your hands in the right position and then add or subtract minutes and hours. To raise the stakes, swap places and let him call the times, warning him that you are going to make mistakes on purpose, what he should catch. Adding fives and tens to 100 helps your child develop a sense of relationship number and multiplication. Use downtime such as car rides. You can start things and ask for help when you are stuck. Look for mathematical options wherever you are: in the supermarket, count can soup in groups of four and when you wait in the restaurant to add and subtract packets of sugar on threes. And don't forget about the templates either. Look for things like geometric wallpaper, tiles - even bricks. They are all poop to detect interesting reps. If you moan every time you have to count a check, you can send a negative message. So when your student complains that he hates math, don't sympathize by saying, Yes, I do, too. Instead, find out why your child feels this way. Perhaps he was confused because he did not know the answer when his teacher called him. He may be intimidated by multiplication tables, or vice versa, it can be boring because the class moves too slowly. To change your child's attitude, remind him of all the important things the math is used for. He identifies winners in board games and batting averages in baseball. Mathematical measurements ensure that his favorite cookies every time will Also point to some people with a cool career - astronaut, programmer, scientist, racer - who use mathematical formulas every day. While boys once far outscoored girls on math tests, this is no longer case. In fact, girls actually get higher math grades than boys during the early years of school. Nevertheless, gender stereotypes persist, in part because men outperform women in mathematics and science. Parents are partly to blame for this inequality. From a young age, boys are more prone to toys that promote mathematical skills and spatial thinking (e.g. building blocks, Tinkertoys and Lincoln Logs) than girls. Once their children are in school, moms and dads (and often school counselors and teachers) tend to discourage their daughters from taking higher-level math courses by pushing their sons to do so. This causes girls to lose confidence in their math abilities and shy away from the subject, according to a study by the American Association of University Women. We need to encourage girls to enjoy and excel in math, says Megan Franke, Ph.D., associate professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles. Playing: Mancala (6 years, \$13; cardinalgames.com)What it teaches: Counting, game strategy: Dino Mathematics Tracks (6 years, \$22; toys4minds.com)What it teaches: Place value, meaningful addition and subtraction of the game: Uno (7 years, \$7; mattel.com) What it teaches: Room Recognition, Less and More Than, Also Game: Pass The Pigs (7 years, \$14; fantasytoyland.com)What it teaches: Counting, adding, subtracting the game: Blokus (6 years, \$30; educationalinsights.com) What it teaches: Geometry, spatial skills, ©. All rights are reserved. Printed with link to an external site that may or may not comply with accessibility guidelines. 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