

MSU Science Zone

No.
16

What is math?

What is math and why is it important? Describing math is difficult because it covers so many things. Math is the study of structure, quantity, shape, and arrangement using processes, rules, and symbols. Math is about solving problems. Everybody uses math whether they realize it or not. When people shop, cook, build, travel, fix things, and even play games, they use math.

In every job people use some math. Many jobs require lots of math, like scientists, doctors, architects, construction workers, the military, and more. There are lots of ways that you can improve your math skills at home in fun ways. Try the activity on the right from the U.S. Department of Education's pamphlet *Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics*. To get the full pamphlet and more activities, visit www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/math/math.pdf.

Learn about opportunities to participate in upcoming science activities and events at MSU by visiting Montana.edu/outreach



TRY THIS

Activities that involve money are a good way to develop mathematical reasoning and to reinforce what children are learning in school about numbers and arithmetic operations, such as addition and subtraction.

What You Need: dice, pennies, nickels and dimes

What to Do:

- Play this game with family or friends and have each player roll the dice.
- Say the number on the dice out loud. Then give the player that number of pennies. Explain that each penny is worth one cent.
- When a player gets five pennies, replace the pennies with a nickel. Explain that five pennies have the same value as one nickel—that is, five cents.
- When he or she gets five more pennies, replace the pennies and the nickel with a dime. Help him/her to see that the value of five pennies plus the value of a nickel (five cents) equals 10 cents, which is the value of a dime.
- The first player to reach a set amount—25 or 50 cents, for example—wins.

