

Helping at Home: Asking Questions

When you're working with your child at home, there are many ways you can help. One of the simplest is to ask questions about their thinking. By expressing curiosity about your child's thinking, you can help them develop deeper understanding, build confidence in their own abilities, and encourage the habit of justifying reasoning.

Two Rules of Thumb

Rule 1: Try to understand your child's thinking.

It's easier to help if you have insight into your child's thinking about the problem. Questions like, "Tell me about ..." or "How did you ..." are great openers.

Rule 2: Build on what your child knows.

Your goal is to help your child build on what they already know. One way to do this is to *paraphrase and question*. When your child shares their thinking, paraphrase what you heard them say, and then ask a question. "I hear you saying ... How did you figure that out?"

Child: *I have to add $\frac{1}{6}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$ to figure out how much of the book he read, and I know I can't just add sixths and eighths. I have to find a common denominator, but I don't know one ... Would 48 work?*

Adult: *I hear you saying you know you can't add sixths and eighths, but you think 48 might work. How did you choose 48?*

Questions to Ask

Here are four questions you can ask in almost any setting. No matter the math task, one of these questions can move the conversation in the right direction.

Question 1: What do you notice?

Question 2: How did you figure that out?

Question 3: How can you show your thinking? (e.g., picture, model, equation)

Question 4: Do you see any patterns?

Remember, you don't need to have all the answers. When you model learning alongside your child, you're teaching them much more than mathematics.