

Ease on Down the Road

Grades 3-5

An important mathematical concept for children to learn is the relationship between two quantities such as *miles per hour* or *cost per gallon*.

What You Need

- * Maps
- * Marker
- * Paper and pencil or pen

What to Do

On car trips with your child—short or long—take advantage of the following opportunities that allow him to apply his math skills:

- * Before leaving on a trip, give him a map and tell him that you want him to be your “navigator” as you drive. Help him to mark the route that you will take. Then show him how to use distance numbers on the map to estimate the distances between different locations. Check the odometer before you begin the trip and have him write down the mileage.
- * As you’re driving, ask him to check the route marked on the map and let you know in advance when you’ll need to turn onto another road—the name and about how far away it is. Point out road signs along the way that tell how many miles to a junction or town or city. Let him point out some for you.
- * On the highway, ask your child to read road signs and look for signs that show the speed limits. Then ask him to watch the speedometer and let you know if you’re driving too fast for the posted limit. Help him to practice his mental math skills by asking him questions such as, “The speed limit is 65 miles per hour. How far will we go in one hour? two hours? three hours? How long will it take us to go 500 miles?”
- * When you stop for gasoline, ask your child to look at the pump to see how many gallons of gas you bought and the cost per gallon. If the gas cost \$1.59 a gallon, ask your child what five gallons will cost. 10 gallons? 20 gallons? Ask him if he knows an easy way to figure this out. (*estimating the cost by rounding the cost per gallon to \$1.60*)
- * When you reach your destination, have your child write down the new mileage on your odometer. Show him how to figure the actual number of miles you traveled by

subtracting the mileage when you left home from the new number. Then have him compare the actual mileage to the estimated mileage.

Involving children in planning trips and in giving them important jobs on the trip, such as following the correct route, can increase their self-confidence as well as their math skills. However, if they make mistakes, such as giving the wrong direction for a turn, they need to be reassured that mistakes are part of learning. Help them to understand what went wrong and how to get back on track.