

Open for Business

Grades 1-5

Learning to use a calculator can help children understand and apply estimation and mathematical reasoning skills, as well as learn addition, subtraction, division and multiplication.

What You Need

- * Empty containers (cartons or boxes)
- * Old magazines, books, newspapers
- * Calculator
- * Pencil or crayon
- * Paper

What to Do

- * Help your child collect empty containers so that you can play as if you were shopping at the grocery store. Gather the items and put them on a table. Help think of a price for each item. Mark the prices on the containers. You can even mark some items on sale.
- * Pretend to be the customer while your child is the cashier. Ask questions such as the following:
 - How much would it cost to buy three cartons of eggs?
 - If the price of soap is \$5 for two bars, then how much does one bar of soap cost?
 - If I don't buy the cereal, how much is my bill?
 - How much more will it cost if I buy this magazine?
- * Show your older child how math symbols (for example, +, -, ÷, x and =) are used on a calculator. Help her add the prices of each item on the calculator and total the amount using the (=) symbol. Have her write the total on a piece of paper, which will be your receipt.
- * Have your child estimate the total cost of the items you are buying. Have her use a calculator to see if her estimate is correct.

Learning to use calculators is important for children—they're part of everyday life. However, they are no replacement for strong arithmetic. Children should not be encouraged to rely too heavily on calculators.