Weighing In

Grades 3-4

Grocery shopping offers opportunities for children to increase their estimation and measurement skills by choosing and weighing fruit and vegetables.

What You Need

* A grocery scale

What to Do

* In the produce section of the store, explain to your child that what you pay for fruit and vegetables is based, in large part, on the quantity you buy and what it weighs—that produce is usually sold for a certain amount per pound. Tell her that pounds are divided into smaller parts called ounces, and it takes 16 ounces to make one pound. Show her the scale that is used to weigh produce.

* Gather the produce you want to buy and ask your child to weigh a few items. Then have her estimate the weight of another item before she weighs it. If you need one pound of apples, ask her to place several apples on the scale and then estimate how many apples she will have to add or take away to make one pound.

* Let your child choose two pieces of fruit, such as oranges. Have her hold one piece in each hand and guess which weighs more. Then have her use the scale to see if she is right.

* Ask your child questions such as the following to encourage her to think about measurement and estimation:

—Will six potatoes weigh more or less than six oranges?

—Which has more potatoes, a pound of big ones or a pound of little ones?

—How much do potatoes cost for each pound? If they cost 10 cents per pound, what is the total cost of the six potatoes?

* If your child knows the metric system (and the scale has a metric range), have her weigh items in grams and kilograms. Ask her to find out the following:

—How a kilogram compares to a pound.

—How many grams an apple weighs.

—How many kilograms (or kilograms plus grams) a sack of potatoes weighs.

—Which contains more apples, one pound or one kilogram?

—Which weighs more, one pound of apples or one kilogram of apples?

In many schools, children learn the metric system of meters, grams and liters, along with the more familiar system of feet, ounces and gallons. Practicing measurement both ways helps children learn both systems.