

## TEACHING YOUR OWN KIDS THE BASICS OF MATH

Self-sufficiency is all the rage in the adult world; why not assume the lion's share of the responsibility for your child's knowledge as well? No matter how good your schools are, the numbers are never as good as one-on-one the way they are at home. Making sure your youngster get the basics of reading, phonics, handwriting, and arithmetic is the parent's job. Math Magic for your Kids and its predecessor Math Magic by Scott Flansburg, the "human calculator" (Morrow, \$19) have hundreds of games and exercises, simple activities to use every day to build math-sense in your kids as young as three. In Math Magic for your Kids, there are workbook-like pages that you can do with kids of all ages, but because you don't want to write in the hardcover book, the emphasis becomes MENTAL. Outstanding! Most kids learn to do just enough math on the page to pass a test. They don't get to internalize it and use it in the real world; this book provides hundreds of ways to get kids to LOVE math and to use it every day in lots of ways, integrating math with arts, science, logic, social studies, and encouraging the blossoming of a kid's basic number sense. All the basic operations, including fractions, are included. For those who say "But I can't do math", the answers are at the back. Flansburg's whole thesis is that EVERYBODY can do math.

In Shapes, Sizes and More Surprises, by Mary Tomczyk (Williamson Little Hands Book, \$12.95) there are dozens of activities that teach alphabet, comparison and observation skills, reasoning and logic, shapes, counting, colors, sorting, fine and gross motor skills, following directions, listening, memory skills, and sensory awareness: all the basic skills every two and three year old ought to be building every day instead of watching the tube.

Joanna Cole and Stephanie Calmenson's Bug in a Rug: Reading Fun for Just Beginners (Mulberry Books, \$7.95) should be in every carpool for preschoolers in the nation. It's got activities to get very little children reading easily, using time-tested tools like rebus-stories, "pattern" stories that repeat predictably, games, rhymes and questions, alphabet puzzles and readaloud stories with only five words! The underlying assumption that EVERY kid can learn to read is one I wholeheartedly applaud. If every mother were told, "I'm sorry, your kids cannot come to school until they learn to read," the moms would teach reading as a matter of course. If you'd

like more detail on how you can teach your own child to read at home painlessly, try a copy of Teach Your Children Well: A Guide to Teaching Your Kid to Read at Home (Fifth Raccoon, \$9.95) or the world's best phonics book which was originally done as a comic strip in the Chicago Tribune, years and years ago, Shortcuts to Reading You Can Teach Your Child by Joan Beck (Career Publishing, \$12.95). And don't forget, handwriting DOES count, especially in the computer age. Make sure your youngster is making the letters properly, with strokes in the right order, and using proper direction. Many kids "get by" with just any old formation, as long as the letter looks right when it's finished.

If you've got a kindergartener, you'll want to get a copy of What Your Kindergartener Needs to Know by E.D. Hirsch (Doubleday, \$24.95pa) and all of the other books in the series (which soon will go up to Middle School level). These books give you ideas of what a child ought to know as a minimum; baseline standards are hard for everyone to agree on, but at least the Core Knowledge folks have the courage to go out on a limb and specify what *they* feel kids ought to know at the very minimum.

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