Keys to Math Fluency
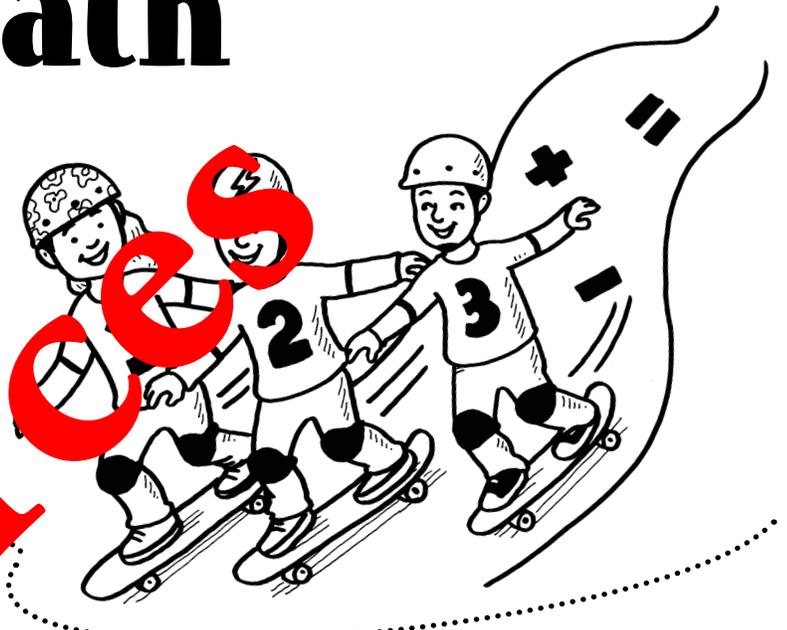
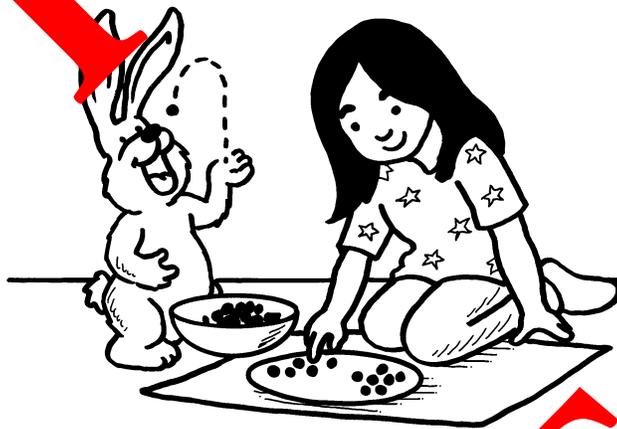*Playtime, snack time, story time…it's always a good time to work on math fluency. A youngster who's fluent in math thinks about numbers in different ways and uses various strategies to solve problems. Plus, he can explain his strategies, which shows he understands the "why" behind math operations. [Try] these activities that will fit "fluently" into your child['s] daily routines.*

Playtime

Whether your youngster counts blocks [o]r rocks, he can practice counting fluently as he [pla]ys. Fir[st], ask him to make the tallest building possi[bl]e by p[lacing] one block on top of another, counting as he [builds.] Next, go outdoors, and let him fill up his dump truck w[ith rocks.] Now he gets to dump it out and count the ro[cks.] [H]ow could he fit in more rocks? [H]e'd need to find sm[aller] ones!

Snack time

Here's a fluency-builder that tastes yummy! [C]hoose [a] snack with small pieces, such as raisins, cer[eal] [piece]s, or [blue]berries. Arrange a handful (say, 12 blueberries) [into two] groups on your plate (maybe 8 on one side and 4 on the o[ther,] and say the number sentence you made (8 + 4 = 12). Let y[our] child take the same number of snacks and show the num[ber]

in a different way (perhaps 5 + 7). *Idea:* Turn your plates around [an]d say the number sentences (4 + 8 = 12, 7 + [5 =] 12). She'll [see] that the total is still the same. That's the *co[mm]utative propert[y of] addition*—add numbers in any order, a[nd the] sum [will] be the [sa]me.

On-the-go time

[H]ow is 17 related to 18? They'r[e "n]eighb[ors"] bec[a]use 17 is *one less than* 18, and 18 is *one more [tha]n* 17! Sp[otti]ng relationships between numbers helps your y[oung]ster [s]olve math problems fluently. In the car or o[n a w]alk, w[ork o]n "neighborly numbers." Point out a num[b]er, [and] ask him to tell you its neighbor. If you pick 35 o[n a s]tree[t pos]t sign, he would say that 34 and 36 are it[s "n]eighb[ors."] *Variation:* Have him tell you which number is [10] less (25) [and] 10 more (45). *Note:* At first, he may need to sta[rt c]ounti[ng] at 1 to figure out a number's neighbor. A[s he bec]o[mes m]ore fluent, he'll be able to answer automatical[ly.]