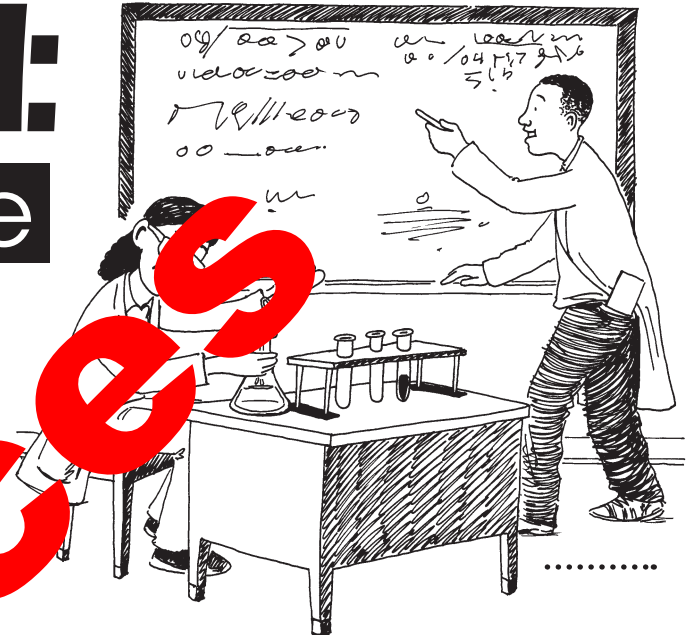


# The Real World: Math and Science



“I’ll never need to know this stuff in real life!”

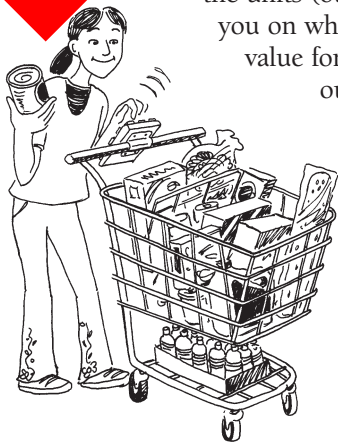
Sound familiar? Many middle graders have trouble seeing the connection between math or science studies and everyday life. Here are some easy ways to show your child how he can use what he’s learning in math and science now—and in the future.

## Math matters

Help your youngster see how the math skills he’s learning will help him manage money, shop wisely, decorate his home one day, and even figure out batting averages.

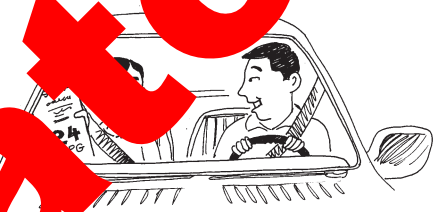
**Personal finances.** You can start by teaching your child to handle a checkbook. Let him write you a check, fill out a deposit slip, and record transactions. Give him practice writing a check (you can void it if needed). When you balance your checkbook, ask your middle grader to do the calculations. If you use online banking, invite him to join you the next time you log on. Schedule a “learning” appointment for the two of you at your bank. A bank employee will show accounts work and give you brochures about banking. Your child will see the importance of math skills (addition for deposits, subtraction for withdrawals) in managing a bank account.

**Smart shopping.** Teach your middle grader to be a smart shopper by putting her math skills to work in the grocery store. Using a calculator, she can divide an item’s price by the units (ounces, servings) and advise you on which size or brand is the best value for the money. *Example:* Sixteen ounces of cheese that costs \$4.59 is a better deal than 10 ounces of cheese costing \$3.99 (\$4.59 divided by 16 = \$2.87 per ounce and \$3.99 divided by 10 = \$3.99 per ounce). Let your child help you make common decisions with math calculations as part of everyday life.



**Sports figures.** Strike up a dinnertime conversation about your favorite baseball hitters. How can your child make a case for his pick? By using math! Help him figure out a player’s batting average with percentages. For instance, if a player has been up to bat 230 times and has 79 hits, he could divide the hits (79) by at-bats (230) for a batting average of .343. Your middle grader can follow players’ batting averages in the newspaper and even offer up the best player for his school’s team.

**Gas mileage.** Does your youngster dream about driving a car one day? Get him on the road to being a good consumer by teaching him to compute gas mileage. At each gas fill-up, he can record the date, miles on the odometer, and gallons pumped. He can subtract the new mileage reading from the old one and divide the answer by the number of gallons needed to fill the tank. Does the figure match the car manufacturer’s estimated miles per gallon? (Suggest that he check the manufacturer’s Web site to find this information.)



**Geometry at home.** Teach your child ways to put her geometry skills to work by asking for her help in rearranging a room. Have her draw the room on graph paper (*example:* 8 squares x 2 squares for a sofa, 3 squares x 3 squares for a chair). Where else could the sofa fit? If you’re thinking about getting new carpet, have your middle grader calculate the price. She will need to compute the room’s square footage (multiply the length of the room by its width) and then multiply the total by the square-foot cost of the carpet.

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