

What Your Kid Is Actually Learning in Math

A plain-English guide for parents who never learned this method.

Why this guide exists

If you've ever looked at your child's math homework and thought 'I have no idea what this is asking,' you're not alone. Schools have shifted to modern teaching methods — and they look nothing like what we grew up with. This guide decodes the five methods your child is most likely using.

The 5 methods your child is using

1. Number Bonds

Visual circles showing how numbers break apart and recombine. Think: $8 = 5 + 3$ or $8 = 6 + 2$. Builds mental math fluency — the foundation for fact mastery.

2. Tape Diagrams (Bar Models)

Rectangular bars that show how quantities relate to each other. Turns a word problem into a picture. Example: "3 times as many oranges as apples" becomes a visual equation.

3. CPA Approach

Concrete ! Pictorial ! Abstract. Kids start with physical blocks (concrete), move to drawings (pictorial), then to paper symbols (abstract). Research-backed method from Singapore.

4. Area Model Multiplication

Breaking 23×14 into a 2×2 grid of smaller rectangles. Adds clarity to WHY multiplication works, not just HOW. Teachers prefer it because kids remember WHY it works.

5. Fraction Strips & Number Lines

Visual fraction tools that make it obvious why $\frac{3}{8} > \frac{1}{4}$. Stops the denominator confusion cold. Kids see fractions as lengths on a line, not mysterious numbers.

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