



# EasyPeasy Living

## Solutions for everyday life

### Boosting Math Skills at Cleanup Time

Maximize on those teachable moments by combining math practice with cleaning up for your pre-K and elementary school-aged kids. Turn it into a game...they'll never know it's good for them, especially if they love math! Here are just a few ideas to get you started.

**Sorting** - Provide your child with several baskets or bins for small toys and have him organize them by whatever attributes he chooses (size, color, type). Post the sorting rule in a central spot and have him follow that rule when putting toys away for a week or a month...whatever interval makes sense. When he gets bored with it, have him create a new rule. At cleanup time, let him pretend to be a "Sorting Inspector" whose job it is to make sure the sorting rule is being followed. Be sure to post the new rule whenever it changes.

**Counting** - Choose a "Daily Number" (a la Sesame Street) and have that be the number of items each family member must put away before going to bed. Give older kids multiplication/division practice by telling you how many items the entire family will be putting away, or give the total to be put away by the entire family and ask them to figure out how many each family member must put away. Ask younger kids to estimate how many lego pieces need to be put away and then have them count them as they pick up.

**Addition/Subtraction** - Have your child make up and solve mathematical problems based on the number of toys to be put away or the number of games that are neatly on the shelf. Example: If there are 5 board games on the shelf and 2 that need to be put away, get him to tell you how many will be put away when everything is cleaned up. Let him make up some of his own problems to solve. If you have two or more children, assign a specific type of item for them to put away and have them count how many they each pick up. Then have them tell you who put away more or less and how many more or less.

**Spatial Reasoning** - Designate a specific space for a certain type of toy or other object and have your child figure out how to configure those items neatly into that space so that they all fit. It's like putting together a puzzle! Board games, puzzles and books stored on shelves are perfect for this exercise!

**Time** - Give your child a set amount of time to clean up his room. Ask him to look at the clock now and to tell you what time it will be when he has completed his cleanup assignment. Alternatively, using a stopwatch, have him clean up as quickly as he can. Tell him how long it took him and ask him to tell you what time it was when he started based on what time it is now.

**Geometry** - Choose a "Daily Shape" for each child and have them find and put away all objects having that shape. Alternatively, have them determine the shape of each object they put away and count how many circles, squares, rectangles or triangles they put away today.

**Measurement/Estimating** - Choose a unit of measure, such as inch, foot, ounce or pound and assign one child the task of cleaning up all objects that they estimate are less than one inch, foot, ounce or pound while the other child puts away all objects that they estimate are more than one inch, foot, ounce or pound. Or have them weigh a bin of toys before cleanup and ask them to estimate how much they think it will weigh when all the toys are cleaned up. Then weigh it again and see how close they got.

**Fractions/Percentages** - Count the number of people helping to tidy and ask your child to tell you what fraction or percentage of the mess each person will be responsible for if the task is divided up evenly.