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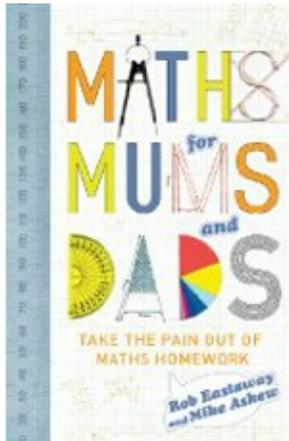
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March 2010

Reviews

'Maths for mums and dads'

reviewed by Liz Woodham



Maths for mums and dads

by Rob Eastaway and Mike Askew

This book is an absolute triumph. Given the authors' reputations, I would expect nothing less, so it is something of a relief to be able to write that first sentence.

The book is written for parents of primary-aged children. It aims to "re-engage" them with mathematics, to gain a greater understanding of the way mathematics is now taught, and to encourage them to inject some enjoyment into mathematics at home. The contents and structure are well thought-out, beginning with a discussion of four big questions that parents often ask:

- Why do they do it differently these days?
- How can I overcome my own fear of maths?
- How can I get my child to enjoy maths and be better at it than I was?
- Why do they (or I) need to know this?

There is a list of handy items to have around the house, which are invaluable props during mathematical conversations (such as an analogue clock, a digital clock, a pack of playing cards and a family-sized bar of

'Maths for mums and dads'

chocolate) and a glossary of mathematical words. The authors also summarise the main ideas that children will encounter during each year of primary school.

The body of the book addresses mathematical topics in turn, from the number system to calculation, fractions, shape, measuring, and finally to data handling. Also included is a chapter on the use of calculators and one on mathematical ideas just beyond the primary curriculum. The authors offer explanations and discussions of the concepts and methods in a straightforward style, laced with humour. Examples are clear and difficulties are not glossed over, rather children's common misconceptions are made explicit. Opportunities are given for the reader to test their own understanding with answers to the questions given at the back. In addition to helping parents understand the mathematics themselves, the book is full of games and other activities to try with their children. Sausage fractions, anyone? String Venn diagrams? Polygon I-spy? These ideas are invaluable. They give parents a way of encouraging mathematical talk in engaging and non-threatening ways at home.

Following a section which gives a flavour of the questions our eleven year-olds currently face in SATs, the book concludes with a list of dos and don'ts. The latter consists of just two items:

- Don't expect children to "get it" after you've explained it once;
- Don't tell them you're hopeless at maths.

How good to be reminded of these two powerful pieces of advice.

Reading this book felt like being in conversation with the authors, rather than being poured full of information. I can imagine it being on the shelf in the kitchen and being pulled down from time to time. It would get well thumbed perhaps there would be splashes of pasta sauce on some pages and other pages may be turned down at the corners to make it easier to find them.

Just one last thing please do not judge this book by its cover, which in my opinion conveys some stereotypical messages about school mathematics. Once you begin to read however, you will realise that primary mathematics can be creative, empowering and enjoyable definitely something you will want to do with your children.

Book details:

Maths for mums and dads
Rob Eastaway, Mike Askew
hardback 368 pages (2010)
Square Peg
ISBN: 978-0224086356

You can buy the book and help *Plus* at the same time by clicking on the link on the left to purchase from amazon.co.uk, and the link to the right to purchase from amazon.com. *Plus* will earn a small commission from your purchase.

About this article

Liz Woodham is the NRICH Primary Coordinator, which involves working as part of a team to develop primary-level materials for the [NRICH](http://www.nr-rich.org) website and to run associated teacher professional development. Liz is a member of the joint MA ATM primary subcommittee and is on ATM General Council.

'Maths for mums and dads'



Plus is part of the family of activities in the Millennium Mathematics Project, which also includes the NRICH and MOTIVATE sites.

In their first, bestselling, book *Maths for Mums and Dads* Rob Eastaway and Mike Askew helped you and your child make sense of the new methods and topics covered in primary school maths. But as your child embarks on secondary school, two new issues arise. First, in the build-up to GCSE, school children begin to do maths that you probably have never encountered before – or if you have, you never really got it in the first place, and have long since forgotten. Factorising? Finding the locus? Solving for x ? Probability distributions? What do these even mean? *More Maths for Mums and Dads* gives you a Start by marking “*Maths for Mums and Dads*” as *Want to Read: Want to Read* saving €| *Want to Read*.[^] In a new edition, fully revised and updated to reflect key new curriculum topics and methods, *Maths for Mums and Dads* guides you through the basics of primary school maths and covers the dilemmas and problems you are likely to be confronted with, including: * number bonds, place value and decimals * long multiplication and division * fractions, percentages and decimals * basi In a new edition, fully revised and updated to reflect key new curriculum topics and methods, *Maths for Mums and Dads* guides you through the basics of primary school maths and covers the dilemmas and problems you are like Do you find you cannot help your children with their maths homework? Was arithmetic with its long division and long multiplication the bane of your primary school life? Help is at hand: mathematician and author Rob Eastaway shows you the new techniques that many children are now taught, and that have been known to leave their parents at a loss. You can hear Rob Eastaway on BBC Radio 4's *More or Less* on Friday 10 September 2010 at 1330 BST and again on Sunday 12 September at 2000 BST. Or catch it on the iPlayer. Share this page.

A brilliant book to guide mums, dads, grandparents and carers through the troubled waters of GCSE maths - and to help you to help your teenager to feel confident and even enjoy it. See all Product description. What other items do customers buy after viewing this item? Maths for Mums and Dads. Hardcover. Mike Askew. It is perfect for mums and dads and their children who will also benefit from this book. What the authors do in this book is to make mathematics understandable. They do this by not just focusing on the procedures used but also, and more importantly, on developing an understanding of the subject.