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KS3 | Ages 11-14

10 Simple Ways to Improve Your Child's Maths Confidence

Supportive strategies for a stage when maths becomes more abstract and self-belief can change quickly.



10

At KS3, confidence means being willing to start, ask questions and learn from an attempt - not knowing everything immediately.



Choose the ideas that fit your child. Consistency and calm matter more than trying everything at once.

1

Challenge the 'maths person' label

Avoid describing anyone as naturally good or bad at maths. Skills develop through teaching, practice, feedback and time.

TRY IT: Replace fixed labels with a specific next step your child can act on.

SAY: "You are learning this topic; it is not a verdict on your ability."

2

Value the process behind the answer

Ask about choices, representations and checks. A thoughtful method deserves recognition even when the final answer is not correct.

TRY IT: Find one sound step, then identify where the reasoning changed direction.

SAY: "Show me the part you feel most confident about."

3

Link maths to their interests

Use gaming statistics, sport, design, music, travel or money to give ratios, graphs, percentages and probability a meaningful context.

TRY IT: Analyse a score table, discount, scale drawing or journey plan together.

SAY: "How could maths help us understand this better?"

4

Keep foundations topped up

Difficulty with algebra may begin with gaps in fractions, negatives or multiplication. Revisit foundations without presenting this as going backwards.

TRY IT: Choose one prerequisite skill and practise it for ten calm minutes.

SAY: "Strengthening this skill will make the new topic easier."

5

Invite explanations, not interrogations

A relaxed explanation reveals understanding and builds mathematical language. Too many rapid questions can feel like another test.

TRY IT: Ask one open question, listen fully, then ask for an example.

SAY: "Talk me through your approach when you are ready."



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6

Break homework into manageable chunks

A full page can feel overwhelming. Divide it into short sections with a clear starting point and brief reset between them.

TRY IT: Complete two questions, check the method, then decide the next two.

SAY: "We only need to focus on the next small step."

7

Use mistakes as diagnostic information

Sort errors into categories: misunderstood concept, calculation slip, missed instruction or rushed checking. Each type needs a different response.

TRY IT: Choose one error and write what would prevent it next time.

SAY: "What does this mistake tell us about the next practice you need?"

8

Support without taking over

Give prompts that preserve independence. Solving the problem for your child may finish homework but can weaken confidence.

TRY IT: Offer a choice: draw it, find a similar example or identify the known information.

SAY: "Which kind of hint would help you move forward?"

9

Use calculators with judgement

Calculators are tools, not shortcuts around thinking. Estimating first helps your child judge whether an answer is reasonable.

TRY IT: Predict the approximate answer, calculate, then compare.

SAY: "What size answer are you expecting, and why?"

10

Reset constructively after assessments

Move from the score to three questions: What worked? What pattern of errors appeared? What is the next realistic target?

TRY IT: Choose one topic and one study habit to improve before the next assessment.

SAY: "This result gives us information, not a permanent label."