

The Role of the Teaching Assistant During the Daily Maths Lesson



Teaching assistants can actively support the teacher during Numeracy sessions. These suggestions cover a wide range of possible roles based on partnership between the teacher and teaching assistant.

Supporting the teacher

Joining in and making contributions

If the discussion is flagging or children are slow to join in, you can model by making contributions. This needs to be done sensitively, as children need time to think before joining in themselves.

(I'd never thought of doubling 30 and then taking off 2, I do it a different way . . . I will try that way next time.)

Dropping helpful pointers

Sometimes children are slow to offer answers and you can offer an idea to help get them started.

(You know that 3 fives are 15, so 3 fifties must be . . .)

Drawing in reticent pupils

Look out for those who are too timid to put their hands up.

(I think Jai has a good idea . . . Jade has a good example . . .)

Supporting children

Look out for the less confident children who need encouragement and help draw them into the lesson.

(Make eye contact - smile, nod your head; encourage to use the 'follow me' card, mouth 'go on . . .')

Assisting Teaching

Demonstrating for the teacher

When the teacher is explaining how to do something, you can show the children what to do.

(Partitioning a number, using the board protractor, pointing out right angles around the class)

Asking for help

You could pretend not to understand something so that a teacher or child can go through step-by-step instructions.

(clarifying instructions for an activity, what is the first step in the problem solving activity, I've forgotten how to . . .)



Echoing the teacher

Repeat or reword phrases for pupils who need extra help.

(‘Subtract’ is another word for ‘difference between’ or ‘take away’)

Directing attention

Help the children focus.

(point to the teacher, signal ‘listen’, point to the page)

Doing a ‘Double Act’

Take a role alongside the teacher in leading an aspect of the lesson.

(demonstrating a paired game, comparing different strategies, using concrete materials)

Acting as a partner for a less experienced child during ‘thinking and talking time’

When children are given a minute or two to talk about their ideas or think about their answers, you can join a child or group where children are less confident about making a contribution. As you talk with them, you can help them express their own ideas and then alert the teacher that they have something to say.

Using supportive props or equipment

Use cubes, counters or bead strings - whatever is appropriate to help children develop understanding of a concept or skill.

Acting as the teacher’s ‘memory bank’

Help the teacher to draw in particular children.
(I think Leon has had his hand up for a while)



Resources Management

Supporting the effective use of teacher’s props

Help the teacher with various resources to aid the smooth running of the session and to add another ‘voice’.

(mirror use of resources on the table with a child or small group)

Preparing, distributing and collecting pupil resources

Help ensure that this happens quickly and give the teacher more time for teaching.

Helping pupils use resources

Show children how to use resources so that they can participate in the lesson.

(Show how to hold digit cards the correct way round, pointing on a number line/100 square)

Observing/Assessing

Noting who 'can' and who 'can't'

Record the names of children who can't do a particular task, such as instant recall of multiplication/division fact, or equivalent fractions/decimals.

Initial assessment

Pick up emergent issues which the teacher has not noticed, such as a child struggling to understand or behaving in unexpected ways.

Observing individual pupils

There has to be a particular focus so that you know what to look for and how to record it. It may be behaviour, level of participation in the session, responses to specific questions - think about where you should be seated - perhaps at the front.

Comparing notes and giving feedback to the teacher

Offer a personal perspective on why some children fail to understand or become restless.

Focused Learning

Focusing Children's attention

Help children focus their attention on the teacher during whole class work by directing children to look, answer or apply themselves to questions.

('Have you checked your card Davina?' 'You've got the answer - go on, put your hand up!')

Sitting alongside a difficult child

Sit beside children who are restless to help settle and involve them during direct teaching time.

Support for children who need specific help to access the lesson

For example, providing extra concrete and visual resources for a child in the early stages of English acquisition.



Making eye contact

Catch a child's eye, smile and pull him or her back into the lesson, or raise an eyebrow, and nod his or her attention to the teacher.

Again, it is helpful to sit at the front for this so that your facial gestures can easily be seen.

Troubleshooting

This could involve various things to help the session run smoothly - sort out minor disagreements, respond to queries, locating a lost number fan.



Questions that can help extend children's thinking

Ask children who are getting started with a piece of work:

- How are you going to tackle this?
- What information do you have? What do you need to find out or do?
- What operation/s are you going to use?
- Will you do it mentally/with pencil and paper/using a number line/with a calculator ...? Why?
- What method are you going to use? Why?
- What equipment will you need?
- What questions will you need to ask?
- How are you going to record what you are doing?
- What do you think the answer or result is going to be? Can you estimate or predict?

Make positive interventions to check progress while children are working, by asking:

- Can you explain what you have done so far? What else is there to do?
- Why did you decide to use this method or do it in this way?
- Can you think of another method that may have worked?
- Could there be a quicker way of doing this?
- What do you mean by ... ?
- What did you notice when ... ?
- Why did you decide to organise your results like that?
- Are you beginning to see a pattern or a rule?
- Do you think this would work with other numbers?
- Have you thought of all the possibilities? How can you be sure?

Ask children who are stuck:

- Can you describe the problem in your own words?
- Can you talk me through what you have done so far?
- What did you do last time? What is different this time?
- Is there something you already know that might help?
- Could you try it with simpler numbers . . . Fewer numbers . . . Using a number line . . . ?
- What about putting things in order?
- Would a table help, or a picture/diagram/graph?
- Why not make a guess and check if it works?
- Have you compared your work with anyone else's?

Once the children have completed a problem, ask:

- How did you get your answer?
- Can you describe your method/pattern/rule to us/me? Can you explain why it works?
- What could you try next?
- Would it work with different numbers?
- What if you had started with . . . Rather than . . . ?
- What if you could only use . . . ?
- Is it a reasonable answer/result? What makes you say so?
- How did you check it?
- What have you learned or found out today?
- If you were doing it again, what would you do differently?
- Having done this, when could you use this method/information/idea again?
- Did you use any new words today? What do they mean?
- What are the key points or ideas that you need to remember?