Math with Confidence Placement Checklist

To find the right level for your child, go through this checklist and find the level for which you can check off every item. For most children, that's the correct level of math for them!

A note on ages: most children are ready to start Kindergarten Math with Confidence when they are 5 or 6 years old. There are some 4 year olds who might be ready, but the number writing and more abstract concepts might be too difficult. If your 4 year old shows interest in math concepts, check out Preschool Math at Home, also by Kate Snow.

A typical progression would be: age 5 - Kindergarten; age 6 - First Grade; age 7 - Second Grade; age 8 - Third Grade; age 9 - Fourth Grade; age 10 - Fifth Grade; age 11 - Sixth Grade. Some people will wait until age 6 to start Kindergarten. In that case, these ages will be bumped back by a year. More important than age, however, is being confident in the skills in the checklist below.

See the end of this guide for the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about Math with Confidence.

Checklist by Grade

Kindergarten

- [ ] Can your child count to 10?*
- [ ] Can they hold a pencil?*

*These are useful skills but not strictly required before beginning this level.

First Grade

- [ ] Can your child count to at least 10 (and preferably higher)?
- [ ] Can they write the numbers from 1 to 10? (it's fine if they're sometimes crooked or reversed)
- [ ] Can they identify basic shapes, such as circle, triangle, and square?
- [ ] Can they solve simple addition or subtraction word problems by acting them out with concrete objects?

Second Grade

- [ ] Can your child count to 100 by 1s, 2s, 5s, and 10s?
- [ ] Can they read, write, and compare 2-digit numbers?
- [ ] Do they understand the meaning of the tens-place and ones-place in 2-digit numbers?
- [ ] Can they write simple addition and subtraction equations, and solve simple word problems with single-digit numbers?
- [ ] Do they know most of the addition facts up to 9 + 9?
- [ ] Do they know most of the subtraction facts that involve subtracting from numbers up to 10 (for example, 7 – 4 or 10 – 6)?

Third Grade

- [ ] Can your child count by 1s, 2s, 5s, and 10s to 1,000?
- [ ] Can they read, write, and compare 3-digit numbers?
- [ ] Can they understand place-value in 3-digit numbers?
- [ ] Do they know the addition and subtraction facts mostly by heart? (They should be able to recall the answers to most within 3 seconds or so. This varies depending on the child's overall processing speed, so it is not a hard and fast guideline.)*
- [ ] Do they know how to use place-value strategies to solve mental math problems like 55 + 37 or 90 – 42?
- [ ] Do they know how to add and subtract two- and three-digit numbers with the standard written process? (You might know this method as "stack math" or "borrowing and carrying.")

*If your child is not fluent with the addition and subtraction facts but knows the rest of the skills listed above, they are probably ready to begin Third Grade Math with Confidence. Make sure to add 5 minutes of daily addition facts practice or subtraction facts practice to each lesson until your child becomes more fluent.

Fourth Grade

- [ ] Can your child read, write, compare, and understand place value in numbers to 10,000?
- [ ] Can they use the traditional process to add and subtract 4-digit numbers written vertically? (You might know these problems as “stack math” or “borrowing and carrying.”)
- [ ] Can they name answers to the multiplication and division facts (up to 10×10 and 100÷10)? They should be able to recall the answers to most within 3 seconds or so. It’s okay if they’restill developing fluency with the tricky 7s, 8s, and 9s.*
- [ ] Can they use addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to solve word problems, including two-step word problems?
- [ ] Can they find the area and perimeter of rectangles?
- [ ] Can they read, write, and compare simple fractions?

*If your child is not fluent with the multiplication and division facts but knows the rest of the skills listed above, they are probably ready to begin Fourth Grade Math with Confidence. Make sure to add 5 minutes of daily multiplication fact or division fact practice to each lesson until your child becomes more fluent.

Fifth Grade

- [ ] Does your child understand place value in numbers to 1,000,000?
- [ ] Can they name answers to the multiplication and division facts (up to 10×10 and 100÷10). They should be able to recall the answers to most within 3 seconds or so.
- [ ] Can they solve multiplication problems with the traditional written process (up to four-digit numbers times one-digit numbers or two-digit numbers times two-digit numbers)?
- [ ] Can they use long division to solve division problems (up to four-digit numbers divided by one-digit numbers).
- [ ] Can they find equivalent fractions and convert improper fractions to mixed numbers (and vice versa)?
- [ ] Can they add and subtract fractions or mixed numbers with like denominators?
- [ ] Can they read, write, and compare decimals to the hundredths place.
- [ ] Can they solve measurement problems and convert measurements within a system of measurement (for example, inches to feet, or kilograms to grams)?
- [ ] Can they measure, compare, and reason about angles?

Sixth Grade

- [ ] Can your child solve whole-number multiplication and division problems (up to three-digit times two-digit or four-digits divided by two-digits)?
- [ ] Can they find a fraction of a set or measurement unit?
- [ ] Can they add and subtract fractions or mixed numbers with different denominators?
- [ ] Can they multiply fractions and mixed numbers and solve simple fraction division problems?
- [ ] Can they read, write, compare, and order decimals to the thousandths place?
- [ ] Can they add and subtract decimals?
- [ ] Can they multiply decimals by whole numbers and divide decimals by whole numbers?
- [ ] Can they solve word problems that involve adding, subtracting, multiplying, or dividing fractions or decimals?
- [ ] Can they find the volume of a rectangular prism?
- [ ] Can they find the mean and median for a small data set?

*Just a note that these skills are the **minimum** that kids should know before starting Sixth Grade MWC. Much more is covered in Fifth Grade MWC.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does the scope and sequence for Math with Confidence compare to other homeschool math programs?

Math with Confidence is a "middle-of-the-road" program. It aims to help children develop both conceptual understanding and procedural fluency in math, so that children know both how to solve math problems and why the methods work. Families with advanced students may choose to go through the program more quickly, while families with kids who take a little longer to grasp concepts may opt to go more slowly.

I'm switching from a different kindergarten math program to First Grade Math with Confidence. What level should my child use?

Most homeschool kindergarten math programs cover the same skills. If your child used a kindergarten math program from a different publisher, she should be fine going straight into First Grade Math with Confidence.

My child is starting first grade, but he didn't use a formal math program for kindergarten. What level should my child use?
If your child is 6, he's likely ready to start First Grade Math with Confidence. (See the skills listed above to check that he's ready.) But, if he did not complete any formal kindergarten math program, you may find you need to spend a little extra time on building number sense with the numbers from 0 to 10 in Unit 1. The Checkpoint at the end of Unit 1 will help you decide whether to continue on to Unit 2 or spend more time solidifying these core number concepts.

If your child is continually frustrated, resisting math lessons, or crying during math time, it's a clear sign that the book is too challenging for his current maturity level, no matter how old he is. In that case, I highly recommend that you put First Grade MWC away until next year and use Kindergarten MWC instead. Every child's brain matures at a different rate, and you and your child will both find your math lessons much more satisfying when your child is developmentally ready for them.

How does the scope and sequence for Math with Confidence compare to public school math programs or Common Core?
Math with Confidence is not aligned with the Common Core. Like most homeschool math programs, it meets or exceeds most CC standards, but it does not necessarily cover every standard.

For example, in First Grade Math with Confidence, children learn to add and subtract numbers to 20, measure length, identify shapes, and understand place-value. These are the usual first grade topics, covered by just about every math program, including ones aligned with the Common Core. But, MWC does not require first graders to reason abstractly about addition and subtraction or offer lengthy explanations of their thinking like many Common Core-aligned programs.

Practically speaking, this means MWC is roughly on grade level with most public-school programs. If you've pulled your child out of public school (or are looking to supplement after school), use the MWC level that matches their grade. Or, if you expect to send your child to public school at some point, he shouldn't have trouble transitioning from Math with Confidence to a Common Core-aligned program.

The first unit looks very easy! Is this really where my child should start?

The Math with Confidence books begin with several weeks of easy review to ease your child into the school year and start the year on a positive, confident note. You're welcome to condense lessons or teach two lessons per day if your child knows the material well. Just be warned that children often forget more than we expect during the summer!

Also keep in mind that there's a lot of important number sense development tucked away inside the "easy review" of the early units in Math with Confidence. For example, here's what a few Amazon reviewers have said about the difficulty level of Kindergarten MWC:

- "I felt like it started off too simple at first, but now I see the base she is trying to build from the beginning and I am glad I stuck with it."
- "DO NOT judge this curriculum based on flipping through the workbook. You will immediately think "this is too easy" or "behind grade level". That's because it's NOT a workbook-based curriculum. It's much more hands on which is what we were looking for."
- "At first glance, I thought this program looked very easy and my 5-year-old would be way too advanced as she already knows how to add, etc. But I was totally wrong. Even just the first unit looks like they just teach numbers but lesson 1.2 is teaching pairs (count by 2's) 1.4 is teaching 2 pairs in the number 4 (pre-multiplication) and 2.1 is teaching ten frames and finding the missing addend (early pre-algebra) 2.3 is teaching 5 pennies equal a nickel (early grouping/skip counting)."

Still wondering what to do?

If in doubt, go with the lower level. You may find that you whiz through it and can teach a couple lessons a day. But, unless your child loves a challenge, she'll probably enjoy math time more (and learn more, too) if you make sure she has a solid foundation before moving to the more challenging level.

It can be so tempting to hurry kids through. But, there's really no rush. From a long-term perspective, children can start algebra anywhere from seventh to tenth grade and still graduate on time with the credits needed for four-year college. So, if your child is "behind" a grade level in his math curriculum when he's seven years old, there's plenty of time for him to learn the math he needs.