



5 Most Common Areas of Difficulty in Year 3

How to support your child

We asked our Atom Education Experts about the 5 most common areas of difficulty in Year 3 and how you can support your child with these.

Here are their top tips:

Comprehension

Comprehension tends to be an area that students struggle with the most throughout Key Stage 2. The most effective way to improve your child's confidence with comprehension is for them to read widely and regularly. If your child is lacking the motivation to read, allow them to choose a book that appeals to them and excites their imagination. It could be fiction or nonfiction. This is a fantastic hook to help your child to develop the habit of reading regularly and for enjoyment.

You could read with your child and ask them to explain the passage afterwards in their own words. This is so valuable for improving their confidence and understanding of what they read. You can also encourage your child to read critically by asking questions about the text, using the 5Ws, who, what, when, where and why and go from there.

Building a strong general knowledge can support your child to understand new, complex texts. Visiting museums or encouraging your child to read a young person's newspaper can help them with this.



Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a common area of difficulty in Year 3 as children see a wealth of new words and definitions. Building a rich and varied vocabulary is key to developing advanced skills in English and Verbal Reasoning. We recommend that your child keeps a vocabulary log. If they come across a new word that they're unfamiliar with, they can stop, write it down, and look up the meaning. Alongside the definition, our Education Experts also recommend writing down a synonym and an antonym to further develop their understanding. As an extension, challenge your child to use these new words in conversation and in writing.

If your child comes across an unfamiliar word in a text, they can also try to deduce its meaning by using context clues to support them. This is a great way to solidify the skills they'll need for verbal reasoning activities.



Telling the Time

Whilst learning to tell the time comes very naturally to some children, for many it can be very challenging. If telling the time is something your child finds challenging, start with simple questions using everyday examples. You could ask your child what the clock will look like at a certain time of day or how long it is until dinner. Practise telling the time with your child every day so this becomes something they can do easily and confidently.

Buying your child a watch can also help them to become more confident with time. You could also hang an analogue clock in a prominent location so that this is really visible. Discuss the general concepts of morning, afternoon and evening. You can then also start to talk about the activities that happen at each time throughout the day. For example “We eat breakfast in the morning” and “School finishes in the afternoon”. When your child is more confident, they can put their own routine into a timetable, blocking off their different daily activities into morning, afternoon and evening.

Getting to grips with time duration is also really important. You can support your child with this at home by pointing out how long things take in everyday life. This could include cleaning their teeth, eating breakfast or how long it takes to get to school. Try timing some of your child’s favourite activities to help them connect with time better. Such as announcing their favourite show will be on in 10 minutes or baking together and setting a timer for the oven.

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Adding and Subtracting with Money

Money is a common area of difficulty in Year 3. It's really important for your child to understand the value of money from an early age. A great way to embed this is by showing your child physical money, from 1p coins all the way up to a £10 or £20 note. If your child has a piggy bank, together, you could regularly count the money they have saved. If they're saving for something they want, calculate each week how much more money they need to save for this item.

If you're taking your child shopping, you could give them a spending limit and ask them to select items for their lunchbox. This is another great way for your child to practice using money in real-life scenarios. You could support them by working out how much different combinations will cost and how much of their budget they have left to spend. This will really strengthen your child's reasoning skills with money. In turn, this will support them with money-worded problems in school.

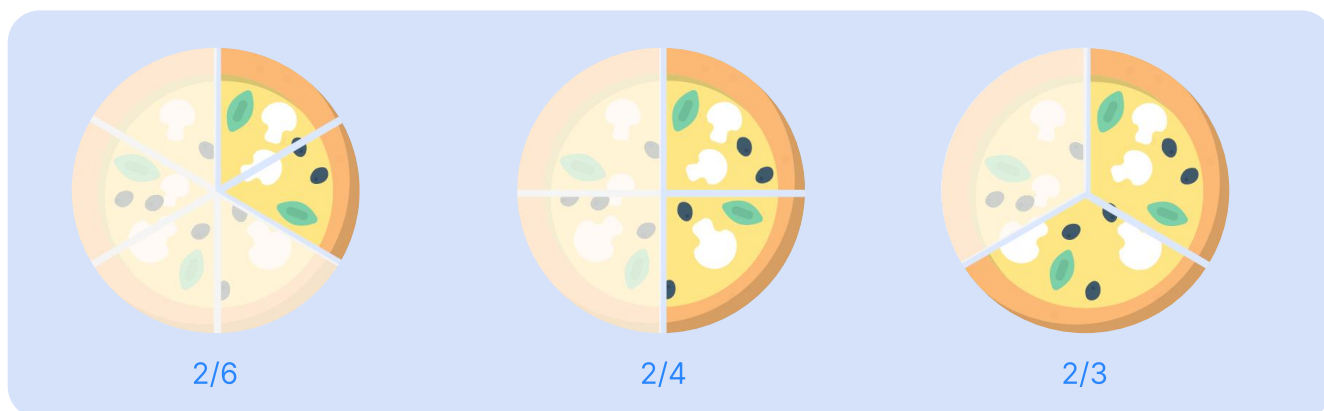
Building strong mental maths skills is key to building confidence with money problems. Practising times tables at home, in addition to mental addition and mental subtraction on Atom Nucleus are great ways to support your child with strengthening this skill. You could also ask your child quick-fire mental maths questions on the way to school every day for 2 minutes to build up their speed with mental calculations.



Order and Compare Fractions and Decimals

Fractions and decimals tend to be an area in maths that children struggle with the most. Visualisation is really important when learning this new skill as it will support your child with understanding the value of different fractions and decimals, as well as comparing the two.

To support your child with ordering fractions based on their size, you can practise with real-life examples, like pizza. Encourage your child to think of one whole as an object, like a pizza or a cake.



You can then ask your child questions like 'Would you prefer it if I cut this pizza into 8 equal slices and gave you a slice, or if I cut the cut into 3 equal slices and gave you a slice?', which will help them to understand the size of different fractions. A common misconception is that $\frac{1}{8}$ is bigger than $\frac{1}{3}$ because 8 is larger than 3. Using real-life objects will support your child with unit fractions and understanding that the larger the denominator is, the smaller each individual fraction is.

You can also make a fraction wall with your child to build on their confidence in tackling equivalent fractions. Fraction walls show fractions very visually. This can be a great way to support your child by seeing that even though some fractions are written differently, they can have the same value, such as $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{6}$.

