



**Q.** I have two children in elementary school that used to be straight A students and are now struggling with the new Common Core curriculum. They are getting it but it is difficult for them and it takes them longer to understand. They are in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Can you shed some light on what they are expected to know for these grades? Dawn Ellis

**A.** Thanks for the question Dawn. Yes, the Common Core curriculum that was rolled out last year has been a challenge to even the best students and their parents. There is a totally different approach to math that parents find they can't help their children with. The Greatschools.org website offers the following for what the Common Core standards are for each grade:

A quick overview of fourth grade Common Core Standards

Parents of fourth graders will see a fair number of changes, and new expectations, in classroom work under the new standards. For students to be successful, teachers and parents need to be strong partners and have a clear understanding of the learning goals.

### **Examples of skills fourth graders should learn under Common Core**

#### **4th grade reading skills**

- 1) Using increasingly sophisticated decoding and fluency abilities to tackle more challenging novels, nonfiction books, and online research.
- 2) Identifying and explaining elements of different kinds of text. Discussing the verse, rhythm, and meter in poetry; the cast of characters, settings, and dialogues in stories; and the timeline,

diagrams, and cause and effect in a nonfiction text.

3) Inferring – a new, subtle skill – to answer questions. Your child needs to point to a few different examples to show how a text conveys a point or outcome that's never expressly stated.

### **4th grade writing skills**

1) Conducting research projects — both independently and as part of group work – by taking notes in their own words on what they read in novels, nonfiction books, periodicals, and digital sources, then reviewing and categorizing the new knowledge.

2) Spending more time on the planning stage of writing. Fourth graders should brainstorm ideas, read and reread, take notes, find additional sources, discuss aloud how new knowledge fits in with what they knew before, and visually organize what they plan to write.

3) Using storytelling techniques, descriptive details, and clear sequences to write compelling tales; using facts, definitions, details, quotes, and examples to develop a report; presenting research-supported reasons to support any written opinion.

Want more? Read our complete article at <http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/320-fourth-grade-reading.gs>

### **4th grade math skills**

1) Solving multistep word problems using the four operations – including division problems where there is a remainder. Write equations for these problems where  $x$  is the unknown number, and use mental math to assess whether their answer is reasonable.

2) Generating number or shape patterns that follow a given rule – and identifying rules of the pattern that are not spelled out.

3) Comparing two fractions with different numerators and denominators by creating common denominators or by comparing new fractions to benchmark fractions such as  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

### **Building skills at home**

1) Do pizza math! Cut 3 pizzas into 4, 8, and 12 slices. How many slices are there in one half of

each pizza? If you eat one fourth of the 12-slice pizza, how many slices would that be of the 4-slice pizza – or the 8-slice pizza?

2) Fourth graders need access to books that fuel their interests and enhance their own special view of the world. Check the library or a bookstore for recommendations that are subject (and age!) appropriate.

3) Model patience with homework. Especially at first, children (and parents) may feel confused by new homework. When parents set the example, children learn to work hard, persist, and stay positive.

## **See skills in action**

Go to [Milestones.GreatKids.org](http://Milestones.GreatKids.org) to watch videos of fourth graders demonstrating strong reading, writing, and math skills.

## **Examples of skills second graders should learn under Common Core**

### **2nd grade reading skills**

1) Perfecting decoding (using patterns to read words and decipher separate sounds) and fluency (reading quickly and accurately, and reading aloud with expression) skills.

2) Splitting their time between fiction (stories, poems, early literature) and nonfiction (history, social studies, science, technical texts) — and generally tackling tougher material. Under the Common Core, reading benchmarks begin in second grade that continue through third grade. The expectation is that second graders should get all the help they need from adults.

3) Using reading comprehension skills to build a knowledge bank: with every poem, story, passage, or book read, there's a main point, message, or key fact (or two) that second graders learn, relate to their life, experiences, and prior knowledge, and "bank" for future use.

Want more? Read our complete article at <http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/199-second-grade-writing.gs>

### **2nd grade writing skills**

- 1) Writing compound sentences, using descriptive words, and looking up new words!
- 2) Practicing three kinds of writing – opinion, informative, and narrative – and writing full-sentence introductions and conclusions for each.
- 3) Getting familiar with the four steps of writing: prewriting (reading and gathering ideas), writing a first draft, revising their work, and making final edits.

Want more? Read our complete article at <http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/199-second-grade-writing.gs>

## **2nd grade math skills**

- 1) Adding and subtracting easily up to 100, including solving word problems and addition and subtraction problems up to 1,000.
- 2) Understanding 3-digit numbers represent 1s, 10s, and 100s; skip counting by 5s, 10s, and 100s to 1,000; comparing two 3-digit numbers using , and = symbols.
- 3) Partitioning circles and rectangles into two, three, or four equal shares and describing the shares using the words halves, thirds, and fourths or quarters.

## **Building skills at home**

Play "store"! Gather canned food, toys, books – and put prices on them. Then, use play money to go shopping. Take turns being the cashier and customer.

2) Include writing in children's imaginative games. Have children write a menu and take orders while playing restaurant. Police officers write tickets. Robbers create and follow maps of the bank.

3) Model patience with homework. Especially at first, kids (and parents) may feel confused by new homework. When parents set the example, children learn to work hard, persist, and stay positive.

I hope that this helps you. For Common Core standards for each grade go to: <http://view.email.greatschools.org/?j=fe57127670660d7f7c15&m=fee91c767c6c03&ls=fd716777665007a7c147072&l=febd1d76776c037f&s=fe2517717167027e721d76&jb=ffcf14&ju=fd0157673630c7b75>

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