

**ANOTHER WAY OF PRACTICING ADDITION, SUBTRACTION,  
MULTIPLICATION, DIVISION, AND MORE.**

I just happened on a last minute Christmas present for my granddaughter, age 3 1/2. She loves Dora the Explorer. It turned out to be a gift with a great bonus. There was one package left of one foot square rubber tiles, 9 of them. They were numbered 1 to 9, interlocking, and decorated with a Dora theme. She quickly put them together when they were opened, in her own order. She's learning to count and to identify numerals (printed numbers). She would happily hop from tile to tile and try to read the number, on her own. This was great.

Later, when she was away from this, her 8 year old brother got on the mat. I soon started giving him tasks: What two numbers make 15? (He put one foot on 7, the other on 8.) Show me another way. (He moved to 9 and 6.) Is there another way? (One foot went on 5, the other on 6, and his hand went down to 4.) Not what I'd asked him to do, but correct, and the only option was to pick three or more numbers if he was to make 15 in a different way.

[Something I could have tried was to ask him to put one foot on 5 and the other on something that would add up to 12. (7)]

Later we tried multiplication/division. Find two numbers that will make 35 if multiplied. (He stepped on 7 and 5.) Find two numbers that will make 16. (He stepped on 2 and 8.) Is there another way? (Both feet went on 4.) [I could have asked him to put one foot on 9 and the other on what would go with it to make 72. (8)]

After many more like this we learned there were prime numbers between 1 and 9, and carried these on a bit.

About this time something else came up. Approximate time of play, 20 min.

Now this young man is very good with numbers for his age. He still enjoyed this. He would have happily repeated this another time.

I've looked a little on the internet; there are more kits like this, not just for Dora. They are inexpensive and multipurpose. They require physical and mental activity which is good for many children.

I wouldn't be surprised if someone hasn't made one just for arithmetic practice.

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This may not be ideal for classroom use, except in special circumstances, but it certainly is great for home use. It has the added advantage of being suited to different ages.

Still, the idea is there. 1 to 9 could be printed on paper divided into 9 boxes. They could be printed in or out of order. As a class or group activity there may be an advantage to having different layouts close together. This time the physical activity involves placing fingers on numbers.

I can also see two children using a single such paper together, one placing a finger on a number, say 4, and challenging the other to touch another that will make 9 (5) by adding, or 12 by multiplying (3).

You could do this at home with your child. Perhaps you can think of other ways to put this to use. I'm sure someone else has.

Sometimes the simplest things can have greater value than what they were produced for, and this set of nine interlocking tiles is a good example.

Keep your eyes open and you may find more.

5	7	3
2	6	1
8	4	9