

Mental Maths Tricks & Shortcuts

12 simple strategies to help children calculate faster, think flexibly and build confidence with numbers.

Trick 1: Add from Left to Right

Break numbers into hundreds, tens and ones. Add the larger place values first.

Example: $347 + 126 = 347 + 100 + 20 + 6 = 473$

Trick 2: Make a Friendly Number

Round one number to make the calculation easier, then adjust the answer.

Example: $48 + 27 = 50 + 27 - 2 = 75$

Trick 3: Subtract by Counting Up

Instead of subtracting directly, count up from the smaller number to the larger number.

Example: $503 - 478$: $478 \rightarrow 480 (+2) \rightarrow 500 (+20) \rightarrow 503 (+3)$, so the answer is 25

Trick 4: Double and Halve

When multiplying two numbers, double one number and halve the other. The product stays the same.

Example: $16 \times 25 = 8 \times 50 = 4 \times 100 = 400$

Trick 5: Multiply by 5 Quickly

Multiply by 10, then halve the result.

Example: $38 \times 5 = 380 \div 2 = 190$

Trick 6: Multiply by 9 Quickly

Multiply by 10, then subtract the original number.

Example: $27 \times 9 = 270 - 27 = 243$

Trick 7: Multiply by 11

For a two-digit number, add its digits and place the sum between them when the sum is less than 10.

Example: $32 \times 11 \rightarrow 3 (3 + 2) 2 = 352$

Trick 8: Find 10% Instantly

Move the decimal point one place to the left, or divide by 10.

Example: 10% of 460 = 46

Trick 9: Use 50% and 25%

50% means half. 25% means one-quarter.

Example: 50% of 84 = 42; 25% of 84 = 21

Trick 10: Multiply by 10, 100 and 1000

For whole numbers, add one, two or three zeros respectively. With decimals, move the decimal point.

Examples: $47 \times 10 = 470$; $47 \times 100 = 4,700$; $4.7 \times 100 = 470$

Trick 11: Use Compatible Numbers

Look for numbers that combine easily to make 10, 100 or another friendly number.

Example: $38 + 62 + 17 = 100 + 17 = 117$

Trick 12: Estimate to Check Your Answer

Round numbers to friendly values before calculating. Use the estimate to see whether your exact answer makes sense.

Example: $398 + 204$ is about $400 + 200 = 600$, so an answer close to 600 is reasonable

Try It Yourself!

Use the tricks above. Try to solve each question mentally before writing the working.

1. $48 + 37 =$ _____

2. $503 - 278 =$ _____

3. $36 \times 5 =$ _____

4. $24 \times 9 =$ _____

5. $42 \times 11 =$ _____

6. 10% of 350 = _____

7. 25% of 120 = _____

8. $16 \times 25 =$ _____

9. $67 + 33 + 18 =$ _____

10. $4.8 \times 100 =$ _____

11. Estimate: $398 + 197 \approx$ _____

12. $84 \div 4 =$ _____

Answer Key

1. 85 | 2. 225 | 3. 180 | 4. 216 | 5. 462 | 6. 35
7. 30 | 8. 400 | 9. 118 | 10. 480 | 11. About 600 | 12. 21