

# 5 Quick Tips to Get the Most Out of Singapore Math

1. Make sure you have the manipulatives, and use them.

Singapore's big idea is that kids learn math best when they first work with concrete materials, then translate these to pictures, and then make the leap to abstract symbols. For example, to learn addition, your child will first use small counters to represent problems. Then, she'll use pictures to solve problems, then finally learn to solve problems with just symbols.

As a result, it's very important that you have the manipulatives necessary to teach the program well. You can find the [full list of manipulatives](#) at the Singapore Math website. You'll also need the Home Instructor's Guide to guide you in teaching the lessons.

2. Do the (hidden) mental math.

Mental math is key to the Singapore approach. But it's easy to overlook when you're using the American version, because the exercises are stuck at the back of the Home Instructor's Guide. Make sure to mark these exercises and do 8-10 problems per day as a warm-up to help your child get a strong foundation in mental math.

3. Consider adding a supplemental book down the road--but no rush.

Singapore Math offers a dizzying array of [supplemental books](#). The textbook and workbook provide a thorough math program on their own, so there's no need to add a supplement if your child is thriving. But if you feel like the program needs a little tweaking to better meet your child's needs, the supplemental books are an easy way to make it a better fit.

- [Extra Practice](#) provides...extra practice, of course. These books match up with the textbook and workbook exactly. If your child doesn't master a concept but has done all the problems in the textbook and workbook, this book that will give you more problems. Available for U.S. edition, Common Core edition, and Standards edition--just make sure to buy the one that matches your textbook/workbook.
- [Challenging Word Problems](#) offer more word problems, along with lots of worked examples. Use this book to give your average student more word problem practice or to give your advanced student a chance to tackle some more difficult problems. Many parents use this a grade

behind the textbook (for example, using the 1st grade Challenging Word Problems book for a second grader) to provide extra review and practice. Aligned with the Common Core edition only, but the problems are appropriate for any child using Singapore Math--they just may not line up perfectly with the textbook.

- [Math Sprints](#) provide mental math drill, but no explicit instruction. Use this if you know you're always going to forget to do the mental math in the back of the Home Instructor's Guide and need it printed (see #2 above.)
- [Intensive Practice](#) books provide more challenging problems to match each section in the workbook and textbook. Some parents of advanced math students use this in place of the workbook. Aligned with the U.S. edition only.
- [Visible Thinking in Mathematics](#) emphasizes helping children transition from the pictorial stage of thinking to the abstract stage as they master each new concept. If you feel like there aren't enough examples in the textbook for your child or you want more help learning how to guide your child step-by-step through each concept, this is a very helpful book!

#### 4. Get to know bar models.

Starting in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students learn to use an incredibly useful tool called “bar models” to solve word problems. You can learn the method as you teach your child, but here's a [helpful summary](#) if you'd like a preview.

Bar models take a little time to get used to, but once a child understands them, they can be used for a huge variety of different types of problems: everything from simple addition and subtraction to complex ratio and proportions. Plus, they lay a great foundation for algebra, when students will use variables to take the place of the bars. If your child needs more practice with bar models and word problems, you can add the [Challenging Word Problems](#) book for more work.

#### 5. Prepare for some weird language. (It's not you, it's the book.)

The Singapore Math textbooks were originally written in Singapore English, but the dialect is slightly different from American and British English. So, some of the questions can be a little confusing for American English speakers. If your child has any difficulty understanding a question, feel free to rephrase it. And if you're confused yourself (which definitely happens!) take a look at the answer key and try to work backwards to what the question must be asking.