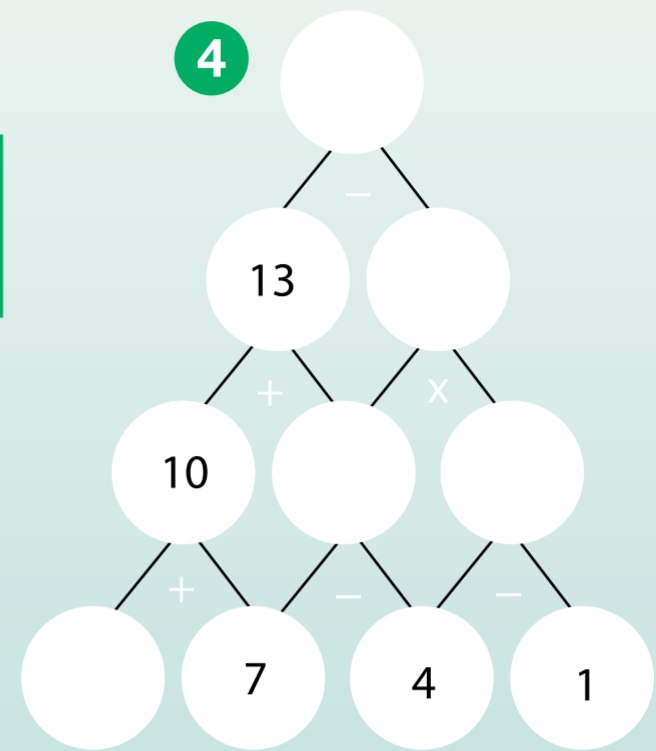


This is the last in a series of holiday activities in Smart Parenting over the year-end school vacation. The activities are by the team behind Little Red Dot, a weekly student publication of The Straits Times.

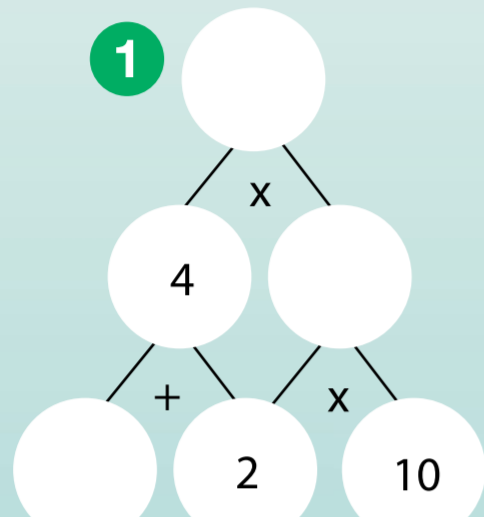


All aboard

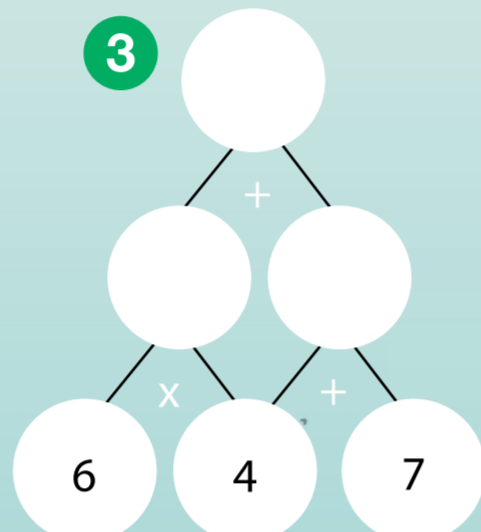
About 2.7 million people take the MRT, or Mass Rapid Transit, every day. How well do you know the train system in Singapore? Complete the maths pyramid and discover some MRT trivia.



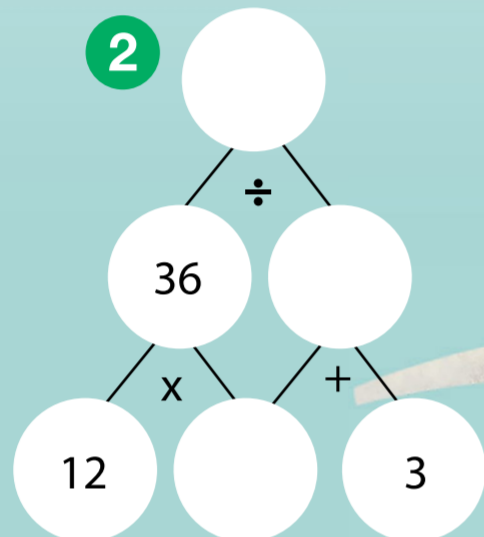
A study by Oliver Wyman Forum and the University of California at Berkeley ranked Singapore's public transport system ___th in the world, after cities such as Hong Kong and Zurich.



MRT trains can travel at speeds of up to ___ kmh.



The longest MRT line in Singapore is currently the East-West Line. It has ___ stations in all.



Singapore has ___ MRT lines that are currently operational.

Answers: 1. 80 2. 6 3. 35 4. 4

INSTRUCTIONS

For each of these pyramids, add, subtract, multiply or divide the numbers in the two adjacent boxes and put your answer in the box above them. Keep moving upwards until you reach the top of the pyramid. Use your answer from the top box to complete each fact.



Text: Isabelle Choy
Sources: Land Transport Guru, Oliver Wyman Forum's Mobility Index Report, Statista
ST Illustrations: Jaster Ngui

Be attuned to the needs of the child

FROM C1

Ms Thian from My First Skool adds that as social distancing measures were lifted since mid-2022, its pupils have been able to enjoy pre-pandemic activities such as field trips and in-centre events for families. "As most of our children attend pre-school service regularly, even during the pandemic, they have not been severely impacted. In fact, this cohort of children has been observed to be more resilient and adaptable," she says. As the new school year beckons, Ms See reminds parents: "Every child is different and the transition process may vary. Be attuned to the needs of your child. Patience, encouragement and a supportive environment can go a long way in helping a child to adjust to a new school environment."

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Elizabeth Tan, six, buying a plate of cheong fun under the guidance of her sister Ruth, nine, at Tiong Bahru Food Centre. Elizabeth's parents task her to order food for the family as part of her preparation for Primary 1. ST PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY

7 tips to help your kid settle into Primary 1

Compared with pre-school, classes in Primary 1 can have double or triple the number of pupils that kids are used to.

They will have to learn to navigate a much larger school building, deal with teachers who may not be as loving and make new friends.

The days may be much longer, without time for naps, and academic expectations are higher.

Experts and parents say these strategies can help smoothen the transition for you and your little one.

1. INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT OF "BIG SCHOOL"

You would have already attended the Primary 1 orientation, but continue to talk to your child about what to expect, such as making new friends and the schedule of a typical day, suggests Ms Pamela See, an educational and developmental psychologist with private counselling practices from

Think Psychological Services and Think Kids.

You can also introduce age-appropriate books or stories around the theme of starting school to reinforce a positive experience.

Introduce the adults with different roles in the school, from teachers to canteen stall owners, and teach your child how to interact with them with respect and kindness, says Ms Thian Ai Ling, general manager of My First Skool.

"Through stories and role play, parents can create opportunities for their children to practise how to interact and talk to their peers and friends, when to ask questions in class and how to face different situations in school," she adds.

2. SET UP A SCHOOL ROUTINE

Start a daily routine a few weeks before school starts, including having regular times for going to sleep and waking up, as well as for meals. "A structured routine helps chil-

dren feel secure and prepared," says Ms See.

3. TEACH SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

When your child wants a chocolate bar at the supermarket and you refuse, does he or she know how to register discontent without throwing a tantrum? If your answer is "no", it is time to teach the child self-management skills.

"Being able to articulate a need and to be taken seriously by an adult who spends time and effort to listen and act is key to building the child's confidence to navigate this new world of the 'big school'," says Dr Mercy Karuniah Jesuvadian, from the National Institute of Education at Nanyang Technological University.

4. ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE

A child who can dress himself or herself, use the toilet and pack and carry a school backpack independently will get a boost in confi-

dence for handling the school day, Ms See says.

Create a packing list so your child can learn to pack his or her bag by himself or herself, Ms Thian says.

5. TEACH NEEDS VERSUS WANTS

One of the common challenges parents face in Primary 1 is kids who overspend at the school bookshop.

Mr Aaron Chwee, head of wealth advisory at OCBC Bank and a father of two children aged 18 and 15, suggests familiarising yourself with the prices of items in the canteen and bookshop to set a realistic budget.

He gave his kids enough daily pocket money in Primary 1 for a main dish and a drink, with 30 cents left over so they could save it in a bank account. They were by then familiar with the concepts of "my money" versus "your money", and were excited about the supervised autonomy of managing their money.

He and his wife also played a game called Wants Versus Needs with them, where they would write down different items on pieces of paper and their kids would have to decide whether it was a want or a need. "This helped them to understand the importance of prioritising necessities," he says.

6. ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEARS (AND YOUR OWN)

It is natural for your child to feel afraid about Primary 1, but do not brush off such fears with a comment like "Don't worry, everyone is nice there. They will help", says Dr Jesuvadian.

"The child has not yet met any of the teachers to come to any conclusion, so such a response is only going to confuse him or her," she says.

Instead, ask your child how you or the teacher can help reduce these feelings of being frightened.

At the same time, recognise the signs of your own anxiety about the transition as kids pick up on their parents' emotions easily, says

Ms Tan Su-Lynn, a senior educational psychologist at Promises Healthcare.

If your child faces continued academic or emotional challenges during the transition, seek help from the school or a private expert such as a counsellor, child psychologist or educational psychologist, she says.

7. RECOGNISE THAT EACH CHILD IS DIFFERENT

Even if it is not your first child entering Primary 1, it is important to treat his or her individual needs differently.

Mr Mark Tan, chief executive officer and co-founder of digital parenting resource Connected (getconnected.sg), is not worried about his third child, Elizabeth, six, entering Primary 1 in 2024, as she has grown up with siblings and caregivers at home despite the social distancing measures.

"Nevertheless, one of our talking points with her has been to prepare her for a new chapter of friendships. The downside to being part of a close-knit group of siblings, with an older sister in the same school, is that she may not proactively look to socialise and making new friends may be a challenge," says Mr Tan, who has four children aged five to nine.

Elizabeth is also meticulous by nature and can get frustrated if she does not meet her own expectations, he adds.

"Setbacks are an integral part of learning and growth, so our approach has been to affirm her meticulousness, while also encouraging her to focus on learning from her mistakes instead of dwelling on her frustration."

He adds: "Sending her with her older sister to order food for all of us when we're out as a family doubles as good practice to write things down so she doesn't forget - and even if she does, it's part of learning in a safe environment."