

National Numeracy Day

Getting Confident With Maths at Work



No matter what job we have, we use maths every day – for example working with budgets, organising schedules, measuring materials and managing time. It might not be exactly like the maths you did at school, but it is maths.

If we feel anxious about numbers, it can make us feel less confident and make it harder to progress in our careers. But you are not alone. There are some things that you can do at work to make working with numbers feel less daunting:

Tip 1:

Don't rush – maths at work is not a race

Feeling under pressure to get answers quickly can make us feel even more anxious about maths. Stop and think about how much time you have and use it if you need to.

It's more important to be right than it is to be fast. Being calm and taking time to find a process that works for you will help you get the right answer.

Tip 2:

Ask for support with your maths if you need it

It can be hard to speak up if we are struggling. But if you do point out an area you need help with employers are often very supportive.

Workplaces may have learning programmes in place already, or you can try the National Numeracy Challenge to support your number confidence.

Tip 3:

Talk about how maths makes you feel

Many of us think we will look silly or be judged if we say we find maths uncomfortable. But many people find working with numbers hard and often your colleagues will feel the same.

Just like when we feel anxious about other things, sharing how we feel about maths and listening to other people who feel the same way can really help.

Tip 4:

Take away the pressure of being around other people

Often people feel stressed when they're doing maths in front of other people.

Finding a space away from colleagues to tackle maths tasks can help us feel less pressured. If that's not possible, try asking people to give you some time and space to work it out and come back with the answer later.

If you work around customers, if possible, why not step away from the shop floor for a moment to work something out?

Tip 5:

Find the right place to do the maths

A busy and loud workplace can make it hard to focus on numbers, which can make you feel more anxious.

If possible, find another room to move to. If you split time between the office and home, you could save the task for when you're in the quietest place.

Tip 6:

Use any tools available to help – maths at work isn't an exam

Many people think that they aren't good at maths if they can't do it in their head. But in everyday life, maths doesn't need to feel like a test.

There are many tools in the workplace that can help us, like calculators and spreadsheets. Using these helps us with our work and doesn't mean we are bad at maths.

Tip 7:

Break down the task into smaller parts

It's easy to feel defeated when you see a big task with lots of numbers in front of you. You might feel anxious even before you start.

But very often big tasks can be split into smaller ones, that feel much easier to solve. Focusing on smaller tasks can feel less daunting and your confidence will grow as you succeed with each smaller part.

Tip 8:

Remember, being anxious about maths isn't the same as being bad at maths

If you feel uncomfortable doing maths at work, it doesn't mean that you can't do it. With practice and the right support, anyone can improve their skills and become more confident at work.

In fact, a little anxiety about maths at work isn't always a bad thing – it shows you care about what you're doing and you want to succeed.

Start feeling more comfortable with maths now by trying our free online resource, specifically designed for those with low confidence.

Give it a go at
nationalnumeracy.org.uk/challenge

