Near Doubles: A Mental Maths Shortcut for Year 2 Addition

A friendly guide to 'near doubles', a mental maths trick that helps Year 2 children solve addition sums quickly by using numbers they already know.

What are near doubles?

Near doubles are a clever shortcut for addition. Once children know their 'doubles'—which are sums where the same number is added to itself, like 4+4=8 or 7+7=14—they can use them to solve nearby sums. For example, if a child knows that 6+6 is 12, they can easily see that 6+7 is just one more, making it 13. It is a way of using a known fact to find a new answer without having to count every single number on their fingers.

How does it work?

In school, teachers might use a number line (a straight line with numbers in order) or a bar model (a rectangular block used to represent a quantity) to show this. By drawing two equal bars of 5, the child sees 10. If they add one more small block to one of the bars, they can see it becomes 11. This helps children spot which double to use. If they see 8+9, they can think, 'I know 8+8 is 16, so 8+9 must be 17.' It turns a harder sum into a simple adjustment.

Why is this helpful for your child?

In Year 2 (children aged 6 to 7), the goal is to build 'fluency'. This means being able to recall maths facts quickly and accurately. Moving away from 'counting on' (counting 7, 8, 9... on fingers) towards mental strategies helps children feel more confident. This skill is a key part of the National Curriculum for England and helps them tackle the types of mental maths questions they will meet in Key Stage 1 (KS1), which covers the first two years of primary school.

Simple ways to practice at home

You don't need any special equipment to help your child. Try keeping it playful and short. While setting the table, you might say, 'I have 5 forks here and 6 forks there. I know 5 and 5 is 10, so what is 5 and 6?' You can also use small toys or pieces of fruit. If your child has Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or is learning English as an additional language, using physical objects they can touch and move makes the concept much clearer.

Common questions

Parents often ask if their child must learn these shortcuts or if counting on is okay. While counting is a great start, these strategies help children handle larger numbers more easily as they progress. You might also wonder when your child should start this; usually, it happens once they are comfortable with doubles up to 20. Because every school teaches at a slightly different pace, it is always a good idea to ask your child's class teacher how they are teaching this method in the classroom.

Sources

- Department for Education, National Curriculum in England: Mathematics programmes of study

- GOV.UK, National Curriculum in England