Position and Direction: Helping Your Child Learn About Turns and Where Things Are in Year 1 Maths

Key points

- Your child is learning to describe where things are and how to move around using precise words like left, right, above, below, between and next to.
- They are also learning about turns: a quarter turn (90 degrees), a half turn (180 degrees) and a whole turn (360 degrees) — this language helps them give and follow exact instructions.
- Precise, unambiguous language matters: saying 'turn left' is clearer and more useful than 'go that way', and children need to understand why.
- Much of this learning happens through hands-on activities, often with programmable toys or floor robots, where children follow or give step-by-step directions.
- Understanding position and direction now builds the foundations for later topics in maths, geography and design and technology.

Things to try at home

- Give simple turn-by-turn directions around your home: 'turn left at the kitchen, walk forward, turn right at the door.' Let your child follow, then swap and let them give you directions.
- Play with toys or dolls and describe where they are: 'teddy is above the cushion' or 'the car is between the table and the sofa' — make it a game with no pressure to be perfect.
- Try a simple treasure hunt at home using direction clues: 'go right, then turn left, then look above the shelf' — short, playful hunts keep it fun.
- Spot positions and directions during everyday moments: 'your coat is next to the door' or 'your shoes are below the table' — casual chat, not a lesson.
- Play turning games together: 'can you do a quarter turn?' or 'show me a half turn' — make it playful and silly, not about getting it 'right'.

Find out more

- The National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 Maths on GOV.UK (search 'Key Stage 1 Maths') explains what your child is expected to learn.
- Your child's teacher — they can show you the specific activities and toys your school uses and suggest next steps if your child would like to practise.
- Your child's school or local educational authority website for any parent guides they have published on maths or early learning.