

Could it be more than "not a maths person"?

A first-look checklist for parents wondering whether their child's struggles with numbers go beyond a phase they'll simply outgrow.

This is not a diagnostic tool. It cannot tell you whether your child has dyscalculia or any other learning difficulty. It's designed only to help you notice patterns worth discussing with a professional. If several items below feel familiar, the right next step is a conversation with an educational psychologist or your child's school, not this checklist.

For each item, mark how often it applies to your child right now: Never · Rarely · Sometimes · Often · Very often.

Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
NUMBER SENSE & COUNTING					
Struggles to tell which of two numbers is bigger, without counting it out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Counts on fingers or objects for simple sums well past the age when peers have moved on	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has difficulty recognising small quantities at a glance (e.g. knowing "3 dots" without counting each one)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MEMORY FOR NUMBER FACTS					
Struggles to recall basic addition, subtraction, or times tables, even with lots of practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seems to "relearn" the same maths facts repeatedly, without them sticking over time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Loses track of numbers midway through a calculation, even a short one	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
UNDERSTANDING NUMBER CONCEPTS					
Has difficulty understanding place value (e.g. that "24" means 2 tens and 4 ones)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Confuses mathematical symbols (+, -, ×, ÷) or reverses/misreads digits (e.g. 6 and 9, or 12 and 21)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Struggles to estimate, e.g. roughly how many items are in a group, or how long a task will take	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
APPLYING MATHS IN EVERYDAY LIFE					
Has trouble reading an analogue clock or judging how much time has passed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Struggles with everyday money tasks: counting change, understanding if there's "enough," or comparing prices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gets confused by direction or sequence: left/right, before/after, or the order of steps in a recipe or routine	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
DIAGRAMS, GRAPHS & VISUAL-SPATIAL MATHS					
Finds it hard to read information off a simple bar graph, chart, or diagram, even when the underlying idea has been explained verbally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has difficulty with shapes, spatial reasoning, or understanding a diagram that has multiple parts and arrows	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO MATHS					
Shows strong anxiety, frustration, or avoidance specifically around maths tasks, more than other subjects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Performs noticeably better in other subjects (e.g. reading, verbal discussion) than in maths, beyond what feels like normal variation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What to do with your answers

This checklist doesn't produce a score or a result. It's meant to help you notice patterns, not calculate a verdict. If you found yourself marking "Often" or "Very often" across several categories, especially if it's been a consistent pattern for a term or more, not just a rough week, it's worth bringing this checklist with you to a conversation with a qualified professional.

Important: This checklist was developed by Strugglesmart as a general awareness tool for parents, informed by publicly available information on number and mathematics-related learning difficulties (including dyscalculia). It is **not a validated clinical or psychometric instrument**, and it cannot diagnose dyscalculia, dyslexia, or any other learning difficulty. Only a qualified professional, such as an educational psychologist, can provide an accurate diagnosis through proper clinical evaluation.

If this feels familiar: *what can help* at home

Practical, low-pressure ideas to try alongside, not instead of, professional support.

Build number sense through everyday play

Make numbers concrete, not abstract

- Use real objects to count, group, and compare: beads, blocks, coins, snacks
- Practise "which is more?" with visible groups before moving to written numbers
- Board games and card games that involve counting spaces or comparing values

Weave maths into daily routines

- Let them handle real money: counting change, checking if there's "enough"
- Involve them in cooking: measuring, halving a recipe, timing steps
- Practise reading an analogue clock during everyday moments, not just lessons

Support number facts and working memory

Reduce the memory load

- Allow a times-table chart or number line as a visual reference, rather than requiring pure recall
- Break multi-step problems into smaller, written-down steps instead of mental chains
- Revisit the same facts often in short bursts, rather than long single sessions

Make abstract ideas visual

- Draw or use physical blocks to represent place value (tens and ones)
- Colour-code steps in a calculation to show the order clearly
- For graphs and diagrams, talk through them together first, out loud, before expecting your child to read them independently

Try talking it through first: if your child struggles to read a graph or diagram, narrate it together before asking them to interpret it alone: "This bar is tallest, so that means the most children chose this one." Verbal scaffolding first, independent reading second.

Protect how your child feels about maths

In the moment

- Praise effort and strategy, not just the correct answer
- Normalise using fingers, charts, or drawings. These are tools, not "cheating"
- Keep a calm, non-judgemental tone, especially after mistakes

The bigger picture

- Maths anxiety can make the difficulty worse. Reducing pressure often helps performance too
- Many children make real progress with the right strategies and support over time
- These are home strategies. They work best alongside, not instead of, guidance from an educational therapist or psychologist

Wondering about support at school and in exams? Strugglesmart helps parents check reports and plan exam Access Arrangements for PSLE and GCE, such as extra time, in English or 华文.

Free first call: strugglesmart.sg/contact

More free parent checklists and toolkits: strugglesmart.sg/toolkits

Considering a formal assessment? In Singapore, the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) offers Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) assessments. You can send an enquiry via their website: das.org.sg/services/spld-assessment/.

A reminder: these are general suggestions, not a treatment plan. Every child's needs are different, and a formal assessment can help tailor strategies to your child specifically.