



The Standards for Mathematical Practice describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students. These practices rest on important “processes and proficiencies” with longstanding importance in mathematics education. They are sometimes referred to as the *8 Standards for Mathematical Practice*. In this and subsequent issues you will find excerpts from these practices as well as brief sketches from the **Conference Board of Mathematical Science** of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematical Practice as they apply to teaching in elementary school.

Math Resources
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3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.

Mathematically proficient students understand and use stated assumptions, definitions, and previously established results in constructing arguments. They make conjectures and build a logical progression of statements to explore the truth of their conjectures. They are able to analyze situations by breaking them into cases, and can recognize and use counterexamples. They justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others. Mathematically proficient students are also able to compare the effectiveness of two plausible arguments, distinguish correct logic or reasoning from that which is flawed, and—if there is a flaw in an argument—explain what it is. Elementary students can construct arguments using concrete referents such as objects, drawings, diagrams, and actions. Such arguments can make sense and be correct, even though they are not generalized or made formal until later grades. Students at all grades can listen or read the arguments of others, decide whether they make sense, and ask useful questions to clarify or improve the arguments.

Standards for Mathematical Practice

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. **Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.**
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Mathematics is about ideas, so mathematical arguments and lines of reasoning are an important part of mathematics, even at elementary school. For example, elementary school students need to give arguments for why strategies for adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing whole numbers work, and similarly with fractions. Students cannot make sense of mathematical arguments unless they think actively about them, which includes making their own arguments and carefully listening to and evaluating other people’s arguments.



Try this!

Ty had 3 big boxes on the table. Inside each big box there are 4 small boxes. He thinks there are 12 boxes in all. What is Tyrone thinking? Is he correct? Why or why not? Explain your thinking.