

# Advice for the Home Team Toolbox

## by Dr. Debi Warner



Dear Dr. Debi,

*Is there a lot of math in renovating? I don't want my kids forgetting all they know this summer. Signed, Looking for Useful Outlets*

Dear Math Hound,

You are right – there is a lot of math in renovating – but not the boring kind. It is great to see the order and proportion of things come to life in your hands as you work on your projects. Seeing how things fit together in such sensible ways makes most of us stop to gasp, if we pay attention.

Kids are great at discovering the patterns that are revealed in the cutting jobs we do for a project. If you let the children play with the waste pieces of wood, block, or tile, they are very likely to see how the shapes add together to make lovely regular angles: many times adding to neat right squares, straight lines, or even a perfect pie. The child will bolt to your side to show you these incredible coincidences, as if they had won the lottery. Jackpot indeed, as it seems just as unlikely that mere waste could bring such happy matches to your 'scrap tickets.' Inside, each of us recognizes these lovely coincidences, as if a great bell were struck near us. How many of us stop to appreciate this? Take a moment when your child shows you the neatly fitting scrap pieces and rejoice together.

Not long after such appreciation and examination, your minds will be working on how to put this lucky coincidence to work for you. Well, there are many, many ways that genius has sprung from such happenings.

Many cutting jobs can be simplified by using the first piece of waste as a jig for further cutting, since the complement or supplement to the angle will often provide a perfect offset to use against your cutting fence and yield uniform pieces time after time for your repetitive projects. Just be careful the first time to check which way it should be laid to make the right result, and mark it so that you keep the right side up and point forward. Some odd angles may take a little juggling and turning of the first piece, but once you figure it out, you will be happy

that things are so predictable from the world of math.

Kids need this hands-on lesson, to get an inner sense of how things can 'snap to grid' when they are on the right track, a feeling that will also ring like a bell when they come to the sensible answer to a calculation when it all makes sense. These summer math lessons may not drill math tables, but will help them develop an inner mental architecture that has places for orderly pursuit of an answer and clear recognition of a proper outcome. Aha, it fits! They will know what 'Aha!' means.

With tile, there can be an added bonus. The little pieces you just cut off one end of the room are so often the exact pieces you need on the other side of the room. Be sure to stop and look after you have cut the first row. I have saved many dollars on materials by just noticing this 'coincidence.'

So is it always just a coincidence? Hummm. That is a good question to ask your little sleuths. See if they can predict where and when such coincidences will happen on the next project you are doing. These observation and thinking skills are very good for every part of their brain's development. Observation is a key in science and living, in general. If we can see patterns, think about our experiences, and compare the two, what wonderful mistakes we may avoid, or profit from!

The ability to come up with an idea of how things work (an hypothesis), allows us to test whether it is true or not. What follows will be fertile for the development of logical thinking, gaining perspective, being able to take a step back from what we do in order to examine how our actions impact the world, or our sandbox. You can see that these skills are good to develop, to learn how to understand the world without having to make every mistake ourselves. The child can become a scientist of sorts, exploring with their mind how things work and whether their idea (their hypothesis) is true or not. It is great to discuss it later with them and encourage them to grapple with information that does not fit, as well as to confirm ideas that bear out.

Do not worry about the little computation skills, but listen for the ringing bell of understanding that can come from the new experiences while your family renovates this summer.

Happy Home Team!

*Dr. Debi*

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*Dr. Debi Warner is the Founder of Renovation Psychology® radio host, and author of the book, Putting the Home Team to Work, available now online at RenovationPsychology.com. Dr. Debi provides advice for greater domestic harmony to folks who are renovating their home – for True Home Improvement. This column is offered for enjoyment and enhancement and is not intended to replace your personal medical care. Photo by Bob Jenks, St. Johnsbury, Vt.*

*Dr. Debi has a consultation practice, from her studio in Littleton, NH, with house calls all over the East coast.*

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