

Guidelines for Devising Questions and Tasks in a Maths Trail

(Devised by attendees at the Primary Teachers Maths Association workshop on May 16th 2001)

- Items should be specific to the location and to the pupils for whom the trail is prepared. Formulaic or traditional textbook-type items are best avoided!
- Children should be encouraged to observe during the trail and then to focus on the maths in the environment.
- It is good if items are grounded in a rich context. Narrative can also help to make tasks more interesting for pupils.
- Pre-trail preparation and post-trail follow-up should be built into a maths trail.
- Some trails will focus on a specific strand whereas others may cover a number of strands.
- A variety of tasks should be included.

- Items should be open-ended.
- Less items in a trail can be better if the mathematical content is interesting.
- Items should involve problem solving and estimation.
- New maths ideas should be introduced to children through the trail.
- Ask pupils how/why they arrived at a particular answer.
- Children should get the chance to look for maths in their environment and to devise their own trails.
- The language of the trail is very important. The level, amount, reading level and the clarity need to be carefully considered.
- Stations/places on the trail might be marked with signs or paint.

- One approach is to explain items to children first and then to use pictures as prompts for the children while doing the trail. A book, *Differentiation through Maths Trails* was recommended for having the same trail page for all pupils but with different questions for each level.
- Teachers should be encouraged to develop and share trails for various ‘school-tour’ venues around the country. Trails can be modified and used by others.
- Can you suggest more?