



Tips for Teachers: Motivating Students to Compete

Teacher Guide • The Lion Cubs Mathematical Contest

Teachers shape how children feel about mathematics. When teachers present competitions as playful challenges rather than stressful tests, students become curious, confident, and eager to participate. A supportive classroom culture — where effort is valued and mistakes are normal — helps even hesitant students step forward.

This guide provides **practical strategies** to encourage participation and get the most from the contest experience.



Build a Classroom Culture That Loves Challenges

A strong learning atmosphere encourages students to try new things and support each other. A collective environment helps young mathematicians grow together, not alone.

- Celebrate problem-solving as a team activity
- Display student work to show that everyone contributes
- Use warm-ups that feel like puzzles, not tests

When students see that "everyone here tries," they naturally want to join competitions.



Present Competitions as Adventures, Not Exams

Children aged 7–14 respond well to stories, imagination, and playful framing.

- Describe contests as "maths quests," "brain adventures," or "mystery challenges"
- Share fun examples from past contests to spark curiosity
- Emphasize exploration over perfection

This helps students view participation as exciting rather than intimidating.



Use Mini-Challenges to Build Confidence

Short, low-pressure activities help students feel capable.

- Weekly "Maths Riddles Day"
- Quick team challenges with stickers or stars
- A "Problem of the Week" board where students can post solutions

Small successes build the courage to try bigger competitions.



Encourage Peer Support and Collaboration

Children are more motivated when they feel part of a group.

- Create small "maths buddy" teams
- Let students explain solutions to each other
- Celebrate teamwork as much as individual achievement

A supportive peer environment allows students to grow through shared effort.



Highlight Growth, Not Ranking

Teachers can reduce anxiety by shifting focus from winning to learning.

- Praise effort, creativity, and persistence
- Show how mistakes lead to better strategies
- Share stories of mathematicians who struggled before succeeding

This helps students see competitions as part of their learning journey.



Connect Competitions to Real-World Curiosity

Children love to understand how maths appears in everyday life.

- Use real objects, games, or stories to introduce concepts
- Show how puzzles relate to patterns in nature, sports, or technology
- Invite students to create their own problems

When maths feels meaningful, participation becomes natural.



Celebrate Participation Publicly

Recognition boosts motivation and builds a positive school culture.

- Certificates for all participants
- A "Maths Stars Wall" in the classroom or hallway
- Announcements celebrating effort and teamwork

Public celebration reinforces that every student's contribution matters.



Guide Students Through the Emotional Side

Competitions can bring excitement — and nerves.

- Teach simple strategies for staying calm
- Normalise nervousness as part of learning
- Encourage students to share feelings and support each other

Emotional guidance helps students approach contests with confidence.



Provide Clear, Gentle Preparation

Students feel more motivated when they know what to expect.

- Offer sample problems and practice sessions
- Break tasks into small, manageable steps
- Encourage students to set personal goals

Preparation builds readiness and reduces fear.



Partner with Parents

Teachers and parents working together create a strong support system.

- Share tips for encouraging children at home
- Invite parents to celebrate progress
- Keep communication warm and positive

A united approach helps students feel supported from all sides.

When teachers create a joyful, supportive, and challenge-friendly environment, students naturally become eager to participate in competitions. The goal is not just to prepare them for a contest, but to help them discover **the excitement of mathematical thinking**.

The Lion Cubs Mathematical Contest • Inspiring Young Mathematicians Nationwide
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