

Estimating Area

Here's a hands-on activity you can do with your fourth grader to directly apply the concept of area to the place she knows best – her house. In addition, it is a good review of measurement because she must use a measuring tape to measure each room. Challenge your child to guess the largest and smallest rooms of the house – she might be surprised at how big her room really is!

What You Need:

- Measuring tape
- Paper and pencil
- Clipboard (optional)
- Real estate section of a local newspaper



What You Do:

1. Begin by taking a walk around the house and asking your child to take some guesses. Which room does she think has the smallest area? Which has the largest area? Which bedroom has the smallest area? Which bathroom has the smallest area?
2. Explain to your fourth grader that she will be measuring each room in the house to check if she guessed correctly. Offer a small prize depending on how many of her guesses are correct.
3. Give her a sheet of paper and ask her to write the following on the top: $A = L \times W$ (Area = Length x Width) 12 inches = 1 foot. Then set her loose to roam the house, measuring and recording the length and width of each room.
4. When she's finished, help your fourth grader find the area of each room by multiplying the length and width. Point out that the area is reported in square feet. Compare the results with her guesses. Hopefully, she has earned a prize. If not, a small "participation" prize for her effort will keep her motivated to learn more!
5. Now it's time to tie this into some real-life learning. Have your child tally the total of all the rooms. If the weather allows, and you have a house with a yard, consider going outside and measuring your house and hard perimeters while you're at it! Then, open the real estate section of your local newspaper and check out what you find. Which houses are closest to yours in size? Which houses would YOU most like to live in, and how big are they? Are the biggest houses always the most expensive? How big is your child's dream house, and what does it contain?

What's Going On:

To understand the concept of area, your fourth grader needs to grasp several underlying skills, such as measurement and multiplication. Next year, students will take these concepts even further as they learn to calculate percentages, decimals, and interest payments. Keep it real and relevant, and these big ideas will make sense in a deep, enduring way. And who knows? Maybe your young mathematician will even end up in that dream house after all!