

ISH NUMBERS IN ACTION

In life, numbers are rarely exact. We estimate the time it'll take to drive, the number of people in a crowd, or how much food to buy. Letting students use "ish numbers" helps them feel safe exploring, builds number sense, and connects classroom math to the real world.

5 Ways to Use "Ish" in your Classroom

Estimation Warmups.

Start class with quick "ish" challenges.

Example: *How many paperclips are in this jar?*

Ish Before Exact.

Always ask for an "ish" answer before solving.

Example: $198 + 203$ - *what's your ish answer?*

Ish Measurement.

Use rulers, strings, or body lengths for "about" measurements.

Example: *How many desk-lengths do you think the classroom is?*

Ish Data.

Bring in messy, real-world data.

Example: *About how many students were in the cafeteria during lunch?*

Ish in Daily Life.

Invite students to spot "ish" numbers at home.

Example: *About how many minutes did it take you to get ready for school today?*

Prompts That Promote "Ish" Thinking

"What's your ish answer, before you calculate?"

"If you had to guess, what feels about right?"

"What's the smallest ish number that makes sense?"

"What's the biggest ish number that makes sense?"

"Can you explain your ish number in a picture?"

"Would your ish answer work in the real world?"

"If someone else gave a different ish answer, how could they both be right?"

The Big Payoff



"Ish" reduces anxiety, increases confidence, and reminds students that math is a flexible, human skill... not a trap for mistakes.