

# Teaching Mathematics through Guided Discovery

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## Teaching Mathematics through Guided Discovery

As with every academic subject, there are a variety of strategies for teaching mathematics to school-aged students. Some strategies seem to be better than others, especially when tackling certain topics. There is the direct instruction approach where students are given the exact tools and formulas they need to solve a problem, sometimes without a clear explanation as to why. The student is told to do certain steps in a certain order and in turn expects to do them as such at all times. This leaves little room for solving varying types of problems. It can also lead to misconceptions and students may not gain the full understanding that their teachers want them to have. So how can mathematics teachers get their students to better understand the concepts that are being taught?

A somewhat underused strategy for teaching mathematics is that of guided discovery. With this strategy, the student arrives at an understanding of a new mathematical concept on his or her own. An activity is given in which "students sequentially uncover layers of mathematical information one step at a time and learn new mathematics" (Gerver & Sgroi, 2003). This way, instead of simply being told the procedure for solving a problem, the student can develop the steps mainly on his own with only a little [guidance](#) from the

teacher.

The ability for children to discover is [innate](#). From birth children discover all sorts of different things about the world around them. It has even been said that "babies are as good at discovery as the smartest adult" (Gopnik, 2005). Discovering is the natural way that children learn. By [interacting](#) with the world around them, they ar...

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... a sense of accomplishment, something they cannot get through direct instruction alone. This sense of accomplishment will raise their mathematical self-esteem. This can, in turn, help students appreciate and enjoy mathematics even more. Few would argue against the idea that any teaching strategy that gets students to believe in themselves and enjoy the subject is a good one.

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