

ConquerMaths

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conquer**maths**.com



I once asked a pupil to note down two things he wanted to improve the following term. He wrote, 'Conker spelling and conker maths'; I knew spelling had to be his priority. I like the ambition though, which is why I love the name given to this website devoted to diagnosing gaps in maths knowledge. It's called conquermaths.com, sending the message that maths is something you can master, or at least get on top of.

ConquerMaths is an online, 24/7, virtual maths tutor, which is the brainchild of frustrated maths teacher and father of ten Patrick Murray from Australia, who originally made simple, five-minute animated lessons synchronised with his own voice to help students get to grips with common problem areas. These have since progressed into a whole heap of polished, professional and

analytical multimedia maths tutorial lessons for pupils in KS1,2,3,4 and 5 to watch and learn. There's a whopping 1,100 lessons archived, ranging from three to seven minutes in length, and a suggested learning path through each major topic in every Key Stage is provided.

The audio-visuals are spot on. The all-important explanations are spoken in a calm, measured, clear voice and delivered in a friendly, step-by-step manner. The lessons are also concise and logical, and broken down into clear and understandable chunks – perfect for helping students learn and retain processes. They are distraction-free too, without unnecessary clutter, cartoons or characters that sometimes can get in the way rather than help. The videos can be paused, stopped and rewind, of course, which means that students can control the pace, going back over something they missed or didn't quite get.

With each lesson you get a bank of questions for students to practise what they have been shown. Answers are submitted online and the work is immediately marked and a score given. This instant feedback is a major thumbs up, because results are recorded for both student and teacher access, and detailed reports can be generated not just for individuals but for classes or the whole school. Content is divided into strands, arranged into levels one and two and then into topic areas. Students can also look at worked solutions, which guide them through their working out and help them understand the areas they didn't quite crack. With every lesson there is a summary sheet, which can be used for revision.

Conquermaths makes the point of valuing and promoting pencil and paper methods as a crucial part of its approach unlike other online programs that require just typed answers. This is to be congratulated because working out and being able to demonstrate a modus operandi is extremely important in exams and all walks of life beyond number crunching.

But is it completely fantastic? Well, it's getting there. Personally, I'd prefer to hear a range of voices and not just one. I'd like to



see a real person on screen too, showing me what to do on the whiteboard. The style and content could be adapted to fit younger learners so that it engages them too. Conquermaths is a triumph in its content and delivery, but it might not suit every learner given that every lesson follows the same format. You won't find any maths games here for example, and for some this is the best way to embed new concepts.

If you want to take a look for yourself and test the water before committing then you can, as there are over 150 free lessons and tests available. A one-year subscription costs £99, giving you access to everything from KS1 to KS5, representing great value for money given the average cost of a private tutor these days is around the £25 ph mark. It is also available as a free classroom resource – visit the website to find out more.

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VERDICT:
Conquering Hero
 Accessible, bite-sized and manageable, consistent in style, and better than any textbook I have used – this site would make an excellent supplementary right-hand man for any teacher!