

Multiplication tables equal child's play, thanks to tutor's inventiveness

Interactive help for maths strugglers

Sheena Hastings

AS any teacher will tell you, knowing your times tables is the basis of every other maths skill you will ever learn.

If you find learning tables difficult, then your ability to progress with arithmetic will be seriously hampered.

Now maths tutor Simon Deacon, of Cookridge, Leeds, has designed and made an interactive aid to improve children's

It looks like a toy. A child can sit on the bus playing with it without looking or feeling like a geek.

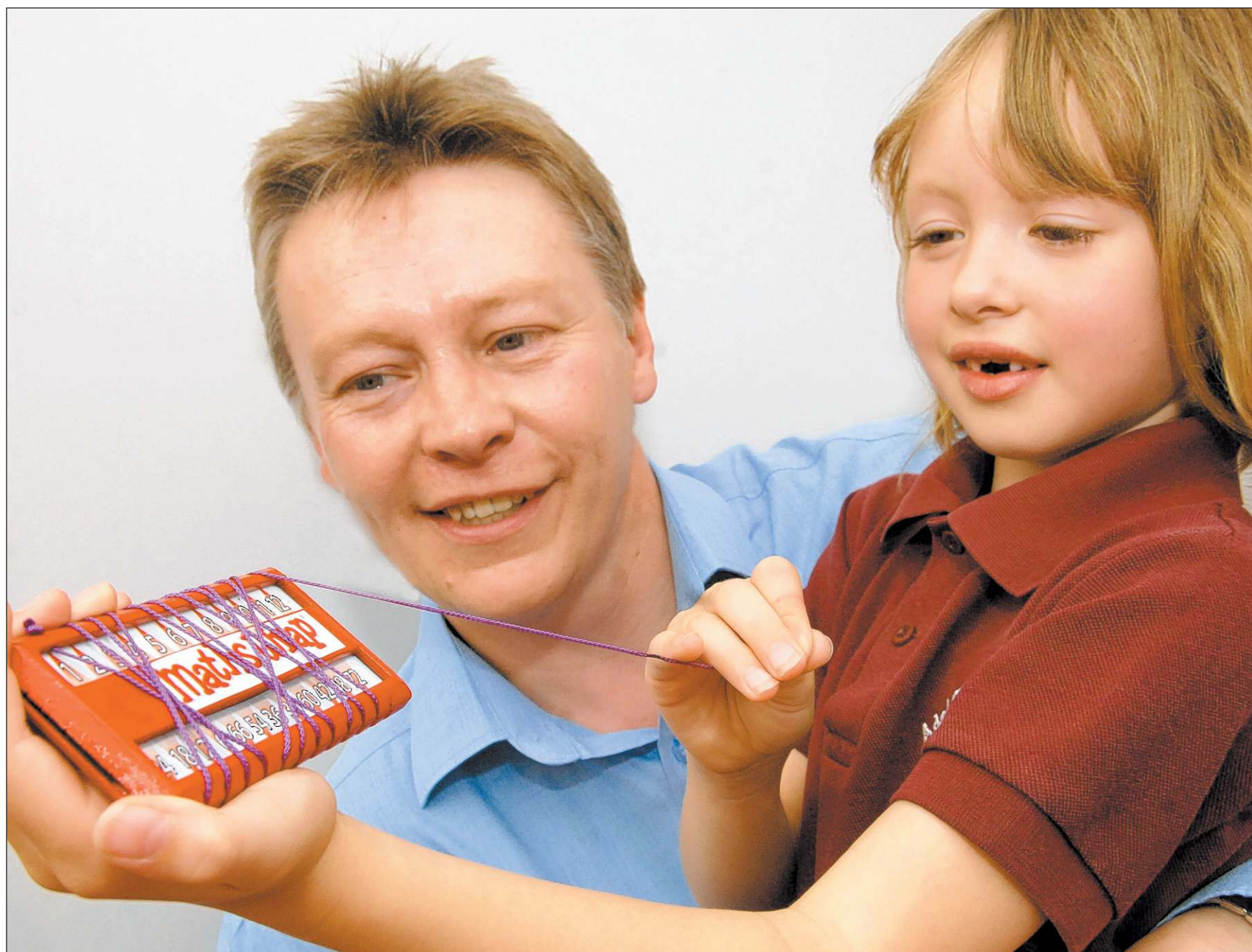
learning of multiplication tables, and will soon be going into production of the iPod-sized device here in Yorkshire.

The Maths Wrap is meant to be used alongside conventional teaching but reinforces the traditional ways of learning tables by providing a challenging and enjoyable activity that feels more like play.

After very positive feedback from local teachers and pupils and with support from the Mathematics Association, Mr Deacon will be marketing the Wrap from November.

Formerly a marine engineer with the Merchant Navy, he came up with the idea of the Maths Wrap after changing careers and opening two centres in Leeds to teach the Japanese Kumon method of maths learning.

The method advocates individ-



PATTERN OF FUN: The Maths Wrap, an aid to learning multiplication tables, devised by Simon Deacon, of Leeds, being used by his daughter Lauren, eight.

Picture: Gary Longbottom.

ualised learning at each child's own pace, and emphasises kinesthetic techniques – learning by doing – rather than learning by rote. Research has shown that about 80 per cent of children respond well to kinesthetics, particularly boys.

The patent on the Maths Wrap is pending and he hopes to sell it for £4.99. He applied to the BBC entrepreneurial talent show

Dragons' Den hoping for funding for the invention. He didn't get past the initial stages but says he's now rather glad, as he has full control of the product.

He is self-funding production with £30,000. The casing will be made in China before the Wrap is assembled in Harrogate by people who have suffered brain injury through illness or injury.

"I made the prototype in a little

shed in the back garden," said Mr Deacon, whose eight-year-old daughter Lauren loves playing with the Maths Wrap. "It's aimed at the seven-to-14-year-old group, and I think one of the beauties of it is that it looks like a toy. A child can sit on the bus playing with it without looking or feeling like a geek."

The hard plastic casing has notches around its edges and

cards inside it which can be changed to test different tables.

The numbers are visible through small windows, and the child relates "3x4=12", for example, by wrapping an attached string around the casing through the appropriate notches to show they know the answer.

As the child becomes more used to using the device, they do the "wrap" more quickly,

demonstrating that their understanding and ability to calculate mentally are improving.

Once a table has been finished, the child can tell if the answers are correct by looking at the back of the Maths Wrap, which will show the pattern of crossed-over cord and whether they mirrored the correct pattern, as displayed in the window.

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Rock the streets and help defeat cancer in celebration of busking

MADNESS frontman Suggs and singer-songwriter Sandi Thom are among musicians, singers and street entertainers supporting what is expected to be Britain's biggest busking event.

Accomplished performers and budding artists have signed up to take part in the nationwide gig, Busking Cancer, in aid of Cancer Research UK.

It will run for a week from September 6 to 13 and involves bands, musicians and singers from all over Britain.

They include a Johnny Cash tribute act from Glasgow, an all-girls school in Marylebone, London, a Banbury man who plays the shawn – a medieval instrument that sounds like the bagpipes – a Fleetwood folk club, a circus performer from Rochdale, and a little boy from Milton Keynes who recently lost both his great grandparents to cancer.

Hundreds of other bands and musicians have signed up to busk – many of them because they have family members affected by cancer.

The event is supported by Fender guitars and aims to raise thousands of pounds for Cancer Research UK's life-saving work.

Suggs – real name Graham McPherson – had a string of hits with Madness, including *Baggy Trousers*, *Our House* and *It Must Be Love*. He said: "Playing music is such a joyful thing and it's the soundtrack to all of our lives."

"I'm lucky enough to make my living from it but many people just play for the sheer fun of it."

"That's the joy of busking – you can just stand up and sing or play anywhere. People love to stop and listen."

"And to do it in aid of Cancer Research UK – to help anyone whose life has been touched by

cancer – is just fantastic. I'd urge everyone to get out on the streets of Britain from September 6 to 13 and have one big party. Have some fun – and raise some money that might just help save someone's life."

Thom, most recently in the charts with *The Devil's Beat* and who had a number one single with *I Wish I Was A Punk Rocker (With Flowers In My Hair)*, said: "Busking Cancer is fun, young and positive."

The man behind Busking Cancer is Mark Warrick, a business analyst for Accenture global consulting, from south London, who lost his birth mother to cancer.

He decided to set himself the challenge to learn to play the guitar in a year and go busking for Cancer Research UK.

Mr Warrick, 26, completed his challenge and organised the inaugural Busking Cancer event

beneath the London Eye last September. The five acts raised £1,376 in just three hours.

Mr Warrick said: "The launch event last year was a storming success, so this year we are making it a nationwide event so musicians across the country can join in the fundraising."

"People can choose their own time and location in that week to busk. You can go it alone or make it bigger by advertising your event and drawing a crowd – either alone or at an organised site."

As a further incentive, Mr Warrick is challenging people who cannot play an instrument to learn one in time for the busking week. Busking Cancer is open to any performers of any age who want to raise money.

■ To register and for more information, visit: www.busking-cancer.co.uk



FROM THE TOP: Madness frontman Suggs who is among singers and street entertainers backing Britain's biggest busking event.

More girls wanting to play football

England's girls are queueing up to play football, proving the beautiful game is no longer a sport for boys, research suggests.

Almost half of all the 430,000 youngsters who take part in England's largest football coaching programme are now female. Figures from the Football Association Tesco Skills scheme, which was launched a year ago, show the majority of girls taking up the sport (65 per cent) are aged between seven and 10.

As seen on BBC TV's Everyman Show

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Reunion for DJs on Radio Luxembourg

FORMER presenters of Radio Luxembourg, one of Europe's most influential and historic radio stations, were reunited for the first time at the weekend.

The station started broadcasting from the tiny European Duchy in the 1930s and went on to change the course of commercial radio history.

Radio Luxembourg was one of the first stations to target teenage audiences directly with a play list of pop music and the use of jocular "disc jockeys".

For thousands of teenagers, listening to the station at night in their bedrooms became a rite of passage as the long-distance signal waxed and waned.

Radio Luxembourg's success challenged the dominance of the mighty BBC and led to the emergence of a number of pirate stations such as Radio Caroline.

The station also launched the careers of many DJs that went on to become household names in the UK such as Noel Edmonds, David 'Kid' Jensen and Mike Read.

This weekend, some of Radio Luxembourg's former stars were reunited in the Duchy as they celebrated the station which broadcast for three generations before finally going off the air in 1992.



FAMOUS NAMES: Former presenters on Radio Luxembourg, from left, David Jensen, Timmy Mallet, Mike Read and Emperor Rosko who were reunited at the weekend in Luxembourg.

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