Helping your child to learn their times tables

Tables are useful. They are a quick way of handling large numbers and they will help your child to get a feel for whether an answer is sensible or not. But they take time to learn and your child will be building up their knowledge over several years at primary school. So it's worth knowing how you can help your child. This is a rough guide to what is expected your child can do, based on National Curriculum:

How can I help?

Encourage your child to practice counting in 2s, 5s and 10s. Try some of these strategies:

- Counting parts of the body such as hands, ears, fingers, etc. One person how many hands? Two people how many hands? One dog how many paws? Two dogs how many paws? One hand how many fingers? Two hands how many fingers?
- Counting 2, 5 and 10 pence coins.
- Reciting number rhymes such as 'One, Two, Buckle My Shoe'.
- Talk about odd and even numbers. Make pairs from piles of socks, shoes or gloves. This helps children to understand the concept of odd and even.
- Try counting steps on a walk or going up the stairs.
- Build up new times tables gradually and keep on practicing the ones your child knows already.
- Chanting times tables is a good way of practicing facts your child already knows. But don't use it when breaking new ground.
- Encourage your child to say your child tables backwards as well as forwards. Saying them in reverse order, from 10 back to 1 will help to find ways of figuring out the ones your child keeps forgetting.
- Number hunt. How many different ways can your child find to make 36 or 48 or 21?
- Test your child are certain key facts that are useful and easy to remember. Help your child to practice them. They include the doubles, the 5 and 10 times tables and the square numbers such as 3 x 3 = 9.
- Colour in the tables your child knows on a 100 square and look for patterns. Encourage your child to look for patterns. The more your child understands about how numbers work, the easier your child will find it to remember your child tables.

For example:

1. The tens all end in a zero;
2. The fives end in a zero or five;
3. Some tables are all even;
4. The four timestable is double the twos;
5. The digits in the nine timestable add up to nine;
6. Some facts, particularly in the 7 and 9 times tables, just don't seem to stick; Encourage your child to find your child own way of working the hard ones out, for example, if your child can't remember 7 x 8, try doubling 7 x 4.