The Times Tables

"I needed more time and more patience."

Evelyn Cabreras

Bright (adj):

1. giving light or reflecting light, shining
2. intelligent, quick

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Share a time you were so nervous, you felt "blocked up" and couldn't talk —even if you knew the answer. What made you feel that way?

2. Did you memorize your times tables? If so, how? Is it helpful to know them by heart?

My big sister and I started school at the same time, although she is one year older than I am. She was bright in class, but I was a little different. I needed more time and more patience in school, but my Dad didn't understand that. The only thing he saw was that my sister was smarter than me.

In third grade, they taught us the times tables. As always, my sister got it right away. My father tested us to see how we were doing, but that made me so nervous. Even if I knew the answer, I couldn't respond. And even now, if somebody asks me the times tables, I get blocked up.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What are some other ways you could describe Evelyn's sister, *other than* "smarter" than her?

2. What do you think might have helped Evelyn have an easier time with the times tables?

Evelyn Cabreras is a student at the Lehman College Adult Learning Center in The Bronx, New York City, where she is studying for her High School Equivalency Diploma. She's from the Dominican Republic. Evelyn loves to spend time relaxing with her family. Her math is getting better and better.

Strategy for Times Tables: Use the Distributive Property

Do you have trouble memorizing your times tables? Think about which math facts are easier for you. Many people find the 1s, 2s, 5s, and 10s a good starting place. How can you add or subtract those numbers to make the times tables you don't know as well? For example, if you don't know your 8s, what would you need to do to make an 8 by adding or subtracting 1, 2, 5, or 10? One way might be to subtract 10-2. So the next time someone asks you what 7 x 8 is, instead of thinking of that as 8 groups of 7, try thinking of the 8 as 10 - 2 so you have 10 groups of 7 minus 2 groups of 7. In math notation that might look like this: 7 x 8 = 7 x (10 - 2) = (7 x 10) - (7 x 2) = 70 - 14 = 56. Try it out with another way of making an 8 and see if you get the same answer. This is called the distributive property of multiplication.