How to teach the 6x tables
(or any other tricksie table for that matter)

Here is a 3-step method for learning the 6x table.

To do this exercise you will need a whiteboard, marker and duster or piece of paper and some pens.
So long as you can work together on one surface, anything goes.

Step 1:
Figure out "the easies"

(Before you start, set a 20-minute timer. If it goes off, stop, and continue the following day).

The first step is to figure out the easy ones. This means they can answer any "6 x ?" almost instantly.

On your surface, write out the following, one-by-one, and check them off:

- 6 x 0 = (answer = 0)
- 6 x 1 = (answer = 6)
- 6 x 2 = (answer = 12)
- 6 x 10 = (answer = 60)
- 6 x 5 = (answer = 30)

From here, ask your child if there are any others they know really well. You may find 11x has already been conquered, but 3x, 4x, and 9x may be relatively new.

Don't forget to check 6 x 0, and 6 x 1. Some children get confused here. Remind them that x ("times") is the same as "lots of", so 6 lots of nothing is nothing and 6 lots of 1 is 6".

When you've got "the easies" for your child figured out, write them down (with answers) on your surface and move on to Step 2.

Step 2:
Identify strategies

Steps 2 and 3 are about deriving strategies, that your child finds logical, in order to remember the rest of the table. Write them down as you go.

There are different ways to approach this, but here is one way to try.

Start with doubles from the 2x "easy":

- 6 x 2 = 12
- 6 x 4 = 24 ("2 doubled is 4, and 12 doubled is 24")
- 6 x 8 = 48 (4 doubled is 8, and 24 doubled is 48 - you might need to pause while this is processed)

Point out that the 2, 4 and 8 match the last digit in the answers, and then go on to point out that it works for 6 x 6 as well:

- 6 x 2 = 12
- 6 x 4 = 24
- 6 x 6 = 36
- 6 x 8 = 48

Then point out the pattern *before* the coloured numbers in the answers (1, 2, 3, 4). Have your child write with you on your surface.

Stop at this point and drill these a couple of times in random order with the "easies" from Step 1 thrown in occasionally.

Step 3:
Figure out "the difficults"

Together, work out *sensible* ways to remember "the difficults".Try to steer your child down a path for a strategy that uses their other knowledge and will always bring them to the correct answer. So, no allowing "I'll just remember that one"! Try these ways if you're stuck:

- 6 x 3 = 12 + 6 = 18   (i.e., use 6 x 2)
- 6 x 12 = 66 + 6 = 72   (i.e., use 6 x 11)
- 6 x 7 = 48 – 6 = 42   (i.e., use 6 x 8)
- 6 x 9 = 60 – 6 = 54   (i.e., use 6 x 10)

Hopefully, your child will be eager to continue at this point because they can feel how close they are to conquering this daunting task.

It's now time to quickly revise the new strategies (in clumps that make sense) and reel off all the "sixes" in a semi-random order. Do the "coloured" set first in random order, then "the easies" in random order, and then "the difficults" in random order.

If your child gets any incorrect, remind them of the strategy they need to work it out correctly. Keep writing!

The next bit is vital. If you're at the 20-minute mark. Stop. Let your child sleep on their new learning. Then, in the morning, see if they'll give it a go. Sleep is essential for brains to process new information. If I know brains (and I do), they will have retained almost all the strategies you set in place the day before. It's like magic!