

Early Maths: Tips to help your child learn

Children often like numbers and will learn to count by rote. This means they may be able to recite numbers in order to ten, but that doesn't necessarily mean they understand what numbers are, or that they represent quantity. So, it is common for children to count inaccurately and not 1:1.

After they have learnt number names they need to recognise numerals.

Help your child by:

- Encouraging them to point to each item or move it to make a group as they count. Start with simple groups of 1,2 or 3 before progressing onto larger quantities.
- Count using your fingers; or use your fingers to represent quantities.
- Asking them 'can I have 2 please' ; 'one more'; 'one less' etc
- Grouping things e.g at dinner time - group potatoes / carrots/ broccoli on the plate and count them. What do you have more or fewer of? What happens when you eat something!!
- Singing number rhymes e.g 1,2,3,4,5 once I caught a fish alive...;
One man went to mow, went to mow a meadow...; Two little dickie birds...
- Introducing simple subtraction through songs such as:
5 little ducks...; 5 little speckled frogs; 10 fat sausages sizzling in a pan...
- Count steps as you climb.
- Pointing out numbers in the environment e.g on front doors, road signs, cereal packets, remote controls, phones etc
- Letting your child play with a calculator

Introduce your child to other mathematical concepts such as:

- Shape language (curve, round, straight edge, corner, pointy, circle, triangle, square, oblong / rectangle etc)
- Size language (tiny, little / small, medium, big, bigger, biggest. Wide, narrow etc.)
- Height language (measure, tall, short etc)
- Weight language (heavy, light, full, empty, balancing etc)
- Positional language (up, down, on, in, under, behind, in front etc)
- Time language (soon, later, now, in one minute, hours, years, mealtimes, days of the week, seasons etc)

Ideas:

- Go on a shape hunt round the house.
- Whilst playing with the farm set or zoo, group all the animals of the same type together and count them. Compare group sizes. Look at the size of the animals and identify the smallest / biggest animals.
- Bake together. Look at the recipe together and point out the numbers. Use weighing scales. Count out eggs, etc.
- Measure everyone in the family. Line everyone up in height order. (Alternatively use cuddly toys!)
- Look at clocks and watches together. Use sand timers or stopwatches/ timers for your child to measure time.
- Take turns - ask each other to 'put the car/teddy in the box' (or on/under etc)