

Making the Most of Maths



Counting

Counting helps children understand the meaning of numbers, the relationship between numbers and quantities.

Birth – 3 years



When babies are very tiny, they love having their toes and fingers massaged and tickled. This will draw attention to their separate toes and fingers. They will start to investigate their own fingers as well as yours. Pass soft scarves between their toes and fingers. As they get older play finger games using their toes and fingers to count. Count “One, two, three” during play such as swinging on a swing, counting cups and plates at a tea party. Count fruit together and move the pieces of fruit one at a time as you count. Count the steps as you go upstairs. Introduce counting throughout the day. They may get numbers mixed up. That is ok – they are learning.

3 - 4 years



Play finger games that allow the children to match one object to one count such as “One potato, two potato, three potato, four, five potato, six potato, seven potato more.” This also introduces some more maths language. As well as “more” you can also introduce “less,” “lots” and “a few.” Use finger puppets (or stickers on your fingers) to make up stories and count the characters. Count to ten with older children. Point to three socks and ask them to guess how many and show three using their fingers. Practice counting on fingers up to five and see if they can show four fingers. Count how many sounds you can hear when you are in the park.

4 - 5 years



Count to ten then keep going! What is the highest number you can count to? What is the most objects you can count? Count to higher numbers when you are out and about - railings, fence posts and pavement squares. Make and play with dominoes. You could use dots, animals, cars and make numerals to match the objects. Try saying how many objects are in a group without counting each one (subitise). Compare the number of objects (stones, buttons, grapes) in two groups saying which has more and which has less. Using four real, objects take one away to show one less than. Add another to show one more than. Play games using dice.

Counting during play



Boxes, tins and baskets with compartments will naturally lead to one-to-one counting and sorting.

Washing lines are great for counting objects then taking them off the line to see how many are left.

Counting during routines

Putting challenges through the day help children to think and problem solve.

Mealtimes – Have we got enough cups, cutlery, chairs?
How many strawberries to make it fair?

Dressing – Can they find one hat, two socks, two shoes?

Keeping Tidy – Put spots or numbers on boxes showing how many (bricks, scarves, teddies...) should go in each box.



Maths Challenge at Home – lots more ideas in the Cumberland Early Years Mathematics Toolkit [Early Years Maths Toolkit \(cumbria.gov.uk\)](http://Early Years Maths Toolkit (cumbria.gov.uk))

Can you find?

- 1 toothbrush
- 2 spoons
- 3 pegs
- 4 socks
- 5 shoes

How many things altogether?

www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/families/publications/count-with-me-maths-tips-for-parents

