



Helping Your Child with Number

In school, we focus on talking through number problems using mathematical language, and on problem solving skills. The main thing to remember when teaching your child about numbers is to make it fun and purposeful. Numeracy skills can be linked into most activities your child already enjoys doing.

Here are some ideas:

- Point out numbers around the house or while out and about. Phones, clocks, calendars, houses, buses, car plates are all around you, so give your child positive attention when they point out a number. First, they'll recognise that it is a number, then gradually they'll learn what number it is, then later you'll be able to encourage them to see sequences or read numbers together.
- Talk through basic, everyday number problems. When baking, you can count the eggs, amount of sugar, tablespoons of water, and so on. Or when sharing out snacks, your child can make sure everyone has the same amount. Get your child to help set the table by counting out the cutlery. Food is a great incentive! Cereal like Cheerios, or dry pasta can be counted out before it's eaten. Decorate biscuits or fairy cakes with raisins or sweets and count them.
- Natural objects such as shells or conkers are also great for counting. Emphasise counting one object at a time. This takes quite a bit of practice. Eventually, more able children can begin to use small groups of objects to add or take away. At this stage, addition or subtraction needs to be practical and visual using real objects. Older children will eventually need to memorise basic addition and subtraction facts in order to solve more complicated problems quickly.
- Introduce numbers in your child's play, so long as your child is willing. If your child enjoys playing with cars, put number stickers on the cars and make shoebox garages labelled with numbers or with numbered parking spaces. Shoeboxes could be put in the correct numerical order. A similar thing could be done with trains.
- If your child enjoys role play, use a toy or old phone to 'call' friends or family, the doctor, or order a pizza. Write numbers in a 'phone book.'
- Make numbers out of dough or use cut straws for candles to put on a dough 'cake' for counting. Play shops by using real pennies and label toys or play food with numbers for buying. Act out number songs using fingers, puppets, soft toys or plastic animals. Talk about what number comes before or after a given number. Use a number line as a visual aid. Some favourites are "Five Green Frogs," "Five Fat Sausages," "One Elephant," "Five Little Monkeys," "Five Ducks" and "Two Little Monkeys".
- For the more active child, draw large numbers on card or paper plates and jump on a number and say its name. Put numbers in order then turn one over to guess the missing number. Number cards could also be pegged on a washing line. Label some boxes with numbers and throw beanbags or balls in for points.
- Play classic games that involve counting such as 'What time is it Mr. Wolf?', hopscotch, or snakes and ladders. Number lotto or snap are good games for learning basic addition and subtraction equations

