



Parents' Guide to Early Mathematics

Parents often ask how they can help at home with maths. This guide explains the thinking behind early mathematical development and offers some practical ideas to try out at home.

Children need to become confident and competent in learning and using key skills.

These are:-

- Understanding and using number
- Developing a mathematical language - (words used in mathematics e.g. less, fewer, shorter, makes, equals, 2 pence, o'clock, empty)
- Finding solutions to mathematical problems
- Pattern, order and relationships
- Logical thinking
- Exploring and comparing quantities, shapes and measures

Children experience maths as part of their everyday environment. The type of maths young children now do is not writing sums but sorting socks. They need to touch and do in order to learn, so their early maths is based on practical activities that can be incorporated into their play.

Here are a few ideas to try:-

- Role play shopping - counting money, matching, recognising and writing numbers
- Setting the dinner table - counting, matching, ordering, position
- Water play - comparing volume, capacity, height and depth
- Climbing frame whole body experience of height, space, weight, angles and direction
- Outdoor walk down the street - counting, recognising numbers, experimenting with big numbers, looking for shapes

Counting is a skill that children often pick up very early. At first, your child might chant numbers in a random way without focusing on each object. Don't worry if your child doesn't seem to count carefully to begin with, this will come later as they learn to match numbers and objects.

Remember to:-

- Point to each object as you count it
- Take the cue from your child - if your child is not interested now, try again another day
- Talk about numbers in context such as "there are five buttons on your coat, but only four on mine, you've got more than me"

But maths is so much more than learning to count - have fun!



These examples illustrate what the oldest Reception children should be able to do by the end of the reception year.

- Say and use number names in order in familiar contexts. (Say numbers and hold up that number of fingers)
- Count reliably up to 20 (and more) everyday objects. Recognise numerals 1-9 (and then, 0-20).
- Use developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems, including doubling, halving and sharing (How many snacks are there? Are there enough for everyone)
- Find one more or one less than a number from 1 to 10 (then, from 1 to 20).
- Use language such as 'more' and 'less' to compare two numbers.
- Begin to relate addition to combining two groups of objects and subtraction to 'taking away'
- Use language such as 'greater', 'smaller', 'heavier' or 'lighter' to compare quantities.
- Use language such as 'circle' or 'bigger' to describe the shape and size of solids and flat shapes
- Use everyday words to describe position. (behind, in, under, beside)

