



Mathematics: learning about numbers, shapes and sizes

Although the subject of 'mathematics' may seem scary and a long way away, children develop core mathematical skills from a very early age. There are lots of things we can do to help children lay good mathematical foundations. We all do these things without realising how useful they are, and how much the children are learning.

- Counting with number names: 1 to 5, then 1 to 10, then 1 to 20 (and beyond) - counting songs and nursery rhymes are ideal - rhyme, rhythm and actions are really helpful.
- Count things - use any and every opportunity. Count stairs and steps, how many biscuits left in the packet, how many cars on the way home, how many peas still to eat on their plate! Try counting spots when playing with dice or dominoes, or playing board games such as Snakes and Ladders or Frustration.
- Encourage the use of words related to quantity such as more, less, bigger, smaller, heavier and lighter.
- Make use of words related to position such as over, under, above, below, on, in, in front, behind.
- Name shapes such as circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, ovals, stars and diamonds. Encourage children to notice and name these shapes at home and when out and about.
- Use toys or other objects to practise sorting into size order. Try the same game with family members! Group different items together and encourage tidying up in to different boxes.
- Encourage the beginnings of addition and subtraction by counting a number of objects and then asking your child to find one more or one less. For example, how many pencils do you have? If I give you one more/take one away, how many do you have now?
- Help your child to recognise written numbers to 5 (and beyond) - perhaps start with the number of their age. Car number plates are helpful tools. Try an activity like choosing a number for the week, for example ... 3. Encourage your child to look out for that number all the time - at home, while out walking. Choose a different number from time to time.
- Read stories with numbers in them and talk to your child about the numbers - e.g. 'Ten in the Bed', 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'.