



HANDOUT 14:
All About Young Children



How are children learning about numbers?
NUMBER SENSE

Tips for families to help children in understanding numbers:

Many of the things that families do naturally with children help them to develop their math and number skills. There are many opportunities in our everyday lives where adults are counting things and children are practicing numbers in their play. Here are some suggestions of things families can do:

- Count out loud, so your children can hear the sequence of numbers and notice how often you use counting in your day.
 - Count the kisses you give your child, count the trees outside your home, or count the number of times the dog barks.
- Point to things as you count them so that children can see how each number you say represents one object.
- Shopping, cooking and eating provide many opportunities for counting:
 - “Shall we get 4 apples or 5? Can you count them for me as I put them in the bag?”
 - “If we get 3 yellow apples and 3 red ones, how many will we have? Let’s count them.”
 - “I think I’ll get the bigger bag of tortillas, because we have all our cousins coming for dinner. Can you reach the bigger one for me?”
 - “We have 3 bags of groceries. Do you think they will all fit in our car?”
 - “How many bags would you like to carry in and how many shall I carry?”
 - “After we wash our hands, can you get 5 tortillas out of the bag for me?”
 - “I need to have 4 potatoes washed. Can you get them out of the refrigerator and scrub them in the sink?”
 - “Can you get the plates to put on the table? How many people do we have in our family? How many plates will you need? Can you make sure there are enough chairs for everyone, too?”
- Ask your child to guess or predict how many things there are and then count them together. Making predictions, even if children's guesses are wrong, gives them a chance to think about numbers and increases their interest in counting.

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- “How many buses will come by before our bus gets here?”
- “How many strawberries do you think are in this basket?”
- You can ask your child simple adding or subtracting questions.
 - “If you have five cookies and you eat two, how many will you have left?”
 - “If you have four pennies and I give you one more, how many will you have?”
 - These little games can be done with actual objects so that your child can see the things. Once they are confident with these problems using objects, you can try asking the questions without the objects.
- You can also invite your child to ask you number questions.
- Children will make lots of mistakes when they are learning about numbers. Without saying that they are “wrong,” you can gently suggest that we count again together. Or you can say, “You counted five ducks and I only see four.”
- These conversations about numbers should be fun. If your child seems stressed or doesn’t want to do these games, you can wait and try again later or try a different game. Most young children are naturally interested in numbers. Keeping number activities fun strengthens their natural interest and encourages them to learn more about numbers.

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