



Top Tips for Numbers !

Numbers can provide a lot of entertainment for young children. First they become aware of the sounds of numbers. Next they begin to understand what they mean. Then they need to recognise them when they are written down. After that they recognise numbers as symbols.

These will give reinforcement to the sound of counting and with it the fact that numbers relate to different amounts. Children will begin to recite numbers from 1 - 10 but this has little meaning at this stage.

- ✿ Children can learn the sound of numbers through hearing and joining in with number songs and rhymes. E.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Once I caught a fish alive.
- ✿ Books and stories that include numbers can help to. Make a point of counting the characters and the key items in the pictures.
- ✿ Point out numbers that appear in everyday contexts such as on a clock, telephone, doors, money and have a practical use.

Before learning to count a child needs to understand 'one to one correspondence'. This means being able to match one object to one other object or person.

- ✿ Practise 'one to one correspondence' in all sorts of different contexts. Laying the table for a given number of people. Sharing playdough cakes with their soft toys. Counting buttons as they do them up on coats etc. Climbing the stairs to bed etc.

Children need to understand what is meant by 'How many are there? Counting opportunities arise with everyday objects such as cutlery, items of clothing, toys. Ask your child to guess how many objects there are before counting them together.

- ✿ Throwing games. Games which involve throwing a number of objects, such as rolled up socks, into a basket or box can give good counting practice.
- ✿ Counting trays. Use paper plates and write a number on the plate. Provide dried pasta, Lego etc and show your child how to count the appropriate number onto each plate before he/she has a try. Underline 6 and 9 to avoid confusion.
- ✿ Counting aloud together. Cooking is a great way to introduce practical maths and extend mathematical vocabulary. You can count baking cases, spoons of sugar, or items used to decorate. Later you can use buns for simple addition and subtraction sums.

Children need to understand that the number of objects is the same however they are arranged.

- ✿ Make some cards with numerals on one side and the corresponding number of spots on the reverse. Lay the cards out with the **spotted** sides upwards and ask your child to put them in order, fewest to most, most to least, one more than, one less than.
- ✿ Try leaving one of the cards out and see if he/she can tell which one is missing. Children will become familiar with the arrangement of spots on the cards. Make cards with different arrangements of spots so that children begin to recognise the number of objects **however they are arranged**.

Children need to recognise the symbols used to represent numbers.

- ✿ Try the same activities using the numeral sides showing for your child to recognise the numbers as symbols. Ask children to match groups of everyday items to the numeral and check by matching the items to the spots on the reverse.

Estimating

- ✿ The ability to estimate is a very useful skill. Encourage your child to guess how many items are on a tray. Always count them out together afterwards so that they can see how close they were.

Remember, each child learns at their own pace. Be sure to notice and name numbers. Talk about how many objects appear in small groups everywhere around you. It is a sure way to put children on the path to mathematical literacy. It will not only teach them about numbers but also ignite a mathematical way of thinking that will allow them to continue to teach themselves.

