



# Count, Group and Compare

## WHY?

Becoming good at math begins long before a child enters school. Even infants are wired to learn simple math ideas, including small numbers, patterns and making comparisons. You don't need to be a math teacher to start preparing your child to be a problem solver. There are fun and simple activities that you can do now to build math and thinking skills.

## Tips for Toddlers (12-36 Months)

### Count

Count with your toddler. Move to bigger numbers as they get the hang of it. Young children learn through all of their senses, so have them point to and touch the objects you count.

### Add and Subtract

Explore what happens when you add or take away items from a group. "You have three crackers. How many will you have if you eat one?"

### Name Shapes

Look for shapes around you. "The clock is a circle. Do you see any other circles?" This could be a fun game when you are out doing errands.

### Match and Sort

Make a game of matching and sorting objects into groups. Your child can match and sort items by their shape, color, size or other features.

### Compare Sizes, Amounts and Weights

For example, describe things as "large, small, light, heavy." Ask your child which objects are larger or smaller.

### Put Things in Order

Practice putting things in order. For example, your child could arrange dolls from smallest to largest, youngest to oldest, or heaviest to lightest. See what other categories they come up with!

### **Make Math Part of Your Life**

Math plays a part in life even when we don't realize it. For example, to prepare dinner, you measure ingredients, set the oven timer and count plates. Find ways to let your child help.

### **Use Music**

Clap and dance with your child. Your child will be learning about patterns while having fun.

### **A-B-A-B**

Have fun with patterns. With an older child, alternate grapes and strawberries. Ask "What comes next?" Can your child make a pattern?

### **Scoop Water**

Give your child some containers to scoop and dump water in the bathtub. They might enjoy pouring water back and forth between containers of different size.

### **Puzzle Time**

Expose your child to shape sorters or simple puzzles. Let them take the lead and problem solve. Provide help when needed, like labeling shapes or encouraging them to turn pieces when needed.

### **Find the Match**

In the kitchen, give your child a container and two lids. See if they can figure out which lid fits and then put it on. Use size and shape words like "longer" and "wider." If they get the hang of it, try more containers and lids.

### **Helping Hand**

Ask your child to bring you a specific number of objects. "Can you bring me two books to read?" Increase the numbers as they learn.

### **Build**

Encourage your child to build with blocks or other objects like empty cereal boxes. Watch as they experiment with combining shapes and testing balance. Describe what they are doing using position words like "below" or "above."

### **Measure While Cooking**

Find safe ways for your toddler to help while you are cooking in the kitchen, like counting and helping to measure ingredients.