

Fun with Math: Number Sense

Math is all around us, and your toddler has been developing math ideas and skills from the moment they were born.

We use math language every day, often without noticing. Research has shown that this matters. Laying a strong foundation with **early math talk** makes it easier for your child to grasp more difficult concepts later.



Math Talk

Math talk grows with your child. It is *simply talking to your child about the math that they experience* (naeyc.org). For example, when you take a walk and count the trees on your block ("Let's count the trees! I see one, oh, here is another, that's two, and another one, that's three.") or when you sort clothes ("This t-shirt is little, that's yours, this one is bigger, it's mine."). We know that children learn best through joyful, playful activities in the context of a loving relationship.

Let's Explore Number Sense

Number sense refers to the skill of counting accurately and comparing quantities. Toddlers love counting, and everyday routines provide many opportunities for practice.

The ability to see small amounts without counting is called **subitizing**. Practicing subitizing with your little one helps to build a strong number sense foundation.

Math Language

Here are some math words to get you started: numbers (1-10), more, fewer, less, add, take away, same, different, next to, above, between.



Activity

Find five counting cubes or other objects that are the same. Count with your child to make sure you have all five. Now it's time to play a game.

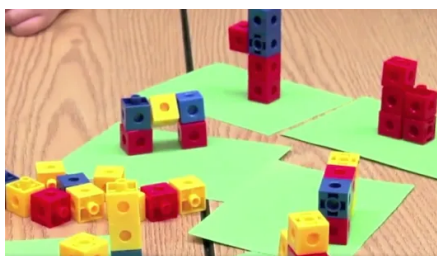
Start easy and put just one cube on a piece of paper. Ask your child to tell you how many cubes they see.



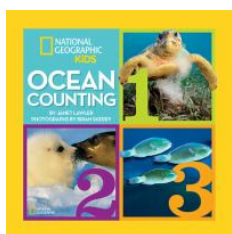
Now make it more challenging and put down 2 or 3. Try putting down the same 2 or 3 cubes in different configurations. The more you practice this with these cubes, as well as other things around the house, the better your child will become at subitizing.

When three is too easy, try four or even five items.

Keep in mind that the maximum number for subitizing (even for adults!) is thought to be 5.



Let's Read



Ocean Counting by Janet Lawler

This book presents young readers with a foundation for learning basic counting skills while discovering some magnificent ocean animals.