



Math Moments

Math is about a lot more than numbers. It's about understanding relationships, finding and making patterns, putting things in order, and much more. As an educator, you introduce math ideas to children every day—when you sort toys, count baby's toes, measure whose shoe is longer, point out square windows, or clap a pattern to a song.

Talk “math talk” with children as you make plans, play games, or solve problems together. These experiences will help them build a foundation for math as they interact and connect with their environment.

- **Help babies develop a sense of predictability.** Give clues that let them know what will happen next. You might tell a baby what is about to happen, make the room brighter or darker, or sing a special song as you put her to sleep. Each baby has her own rhythms of waking and sleeping, eating, and play. Some babies are naturally more regular than others.
- **Create a few simple routines to help older babies and toddlers know what to expect.** You might go outside after lunch each day or sing a special song as you help children get their coats on and get ready to go out.
- **Use math words as you play with babies and toddlers.** Talk about what comes first and next, which is bigger or smaller, and whether you have too much, just enough, or need more. Encourage toddlers to repeat the words after you or say them along with you.
- **Count out loud in time to children's actions.** You can count kicks, claps, bangs, or steps.
- **Make counting rhymes part of your daily routines.** You can count berries for snack time, toes as a baby settles down for naptime, or steps from your door to the outside play area.
- **Count with children in their home languages.** Encourage parents to do it, too. Even if you only count to five, children will be starting to learn a pattern that they will use as they grow.
- **Use math vocabulary as you talk with children,** including words for size, shape, order, measurement, direction, time, and problem solving. Count and reason aloud.
- **Play matching games with a toddler to help him develop reasoning skills.** You can use groups of items from daily routines. Chose one item and have him find another item to go with that group (for example, match a pot and a lid; a pair of boots; a raincoat and umbrella).
- **Show toddlers numerals** on phones, clocks, and calendars and name them in order. Help them find numerals on signs, license plates, food packaging, and buildings.
- **Read books that highlight counting, shapes, or colors.** Engage children in identifying pictures, counting, and repeating refrains. Read a patterned story such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Eric Carle, and pause to let toddlers fill in the pattern.