

Learning possibilities for counting

Rote Counting

This is when children memorise the name of numerals and can recite them, for example: as they walk up the stairs, count some toys, count the number of grapes in their bowl.

Young children may often leave out numbers or get the counting order confused.

Remember, like any other aspect of your child/children's development accurate counting skills take time and practice to develop.

One-to-one correspondence

This is when children count each object separately and use a number name for each object. Young children may often repeat a number name, miss an object or count the same object twice.

Play Ideas to Try

- Support your child/children to play 'What's the time Mr Wolf' outside. As the wolf, stand on one side of the yard facing away from your child/children. Ask them to call out 'What's the time Mr Wolf?' Call out a number from 1 to 10 and encourage your child/children to count out that many steps towards you. Repeat this one or two more times, then on the next turn, call out 'Dinner time!' and chase your child/children back to the starting location. Have fun taking turns at being the wolf.
- Encourage your child/children to think of actions for the rhyme 'Counting apples'. Read each line of the rhyme aloud to your child/children and invite them to think of a movement for that line, for example 'How do you think we could show *hanging on a tree*? What could we do with our arms/legs/bodies?' Any movements will do – miming shapes, making small movements like finger wiggles, or big movements like jumping, hopping or spinning. Have fun and share some photos of the family playing this rhyme with loved ones.
- When it's meal time, encourage your child/children to help set the table. Talk about how many of each item you will need, 'We are having sausages and salad for dinner and yoghurt for dessert. I think we will need a knife to cut the sausages. What else will we need? You're right Sammy, we will need a fork.' Support your child/children to count the cutlery as they set the table, 'I wonder if you can count out enough forks for all of us. That's right, we need four.'

Resources

'Counting apples' (finger rhyme; Tune: 'Ten green bottles')
Five red apples
Hanging on a tree (five fingers held up)
The juiciest apples you ever did see!
The wind came past
And gave an angry frown (shake head and look angry)
And one little apple came tumbling down.
Four red apples ... (continue the rhyme)

Video

Bill Martin's Chicka, Chicka 1, 2, 3
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWrvnvPPxSo>

Text: Martin, B. 2004, *Chicka, Chicka 1, 2, 3*, Simon Schuster, New York

Engage

Step 1. If you have this book at home, encourage your child/children to predict what the story is about from the cover. If not use the suggested video link in the resources box and watch the story together.

Step 2. Read/watch the story.

Step 3. Here are some questions to ask your child/children about the story.

1. What sort of tree did the numbers climb? (apple tree)
2. What number is your favourite?
3. How did the zero feel when all the numbers went up the tree? (sad, lonely)
4. Why do you think the numbers all got out of the tree when the bumblebees came along?

Play Ideas to Try

- Encourage your child/children to use household items to make instruments, for example shakers (rice in a small plastic container with a tight-fitting lid works well) or a drum from an upturned saucepan and a wooden spoon. Invite your child/children to use their instruments as they listen to the story, 'Chicka chicka – that sounds a bit like the sound that the shaker makes. How could we do that with our shakers?', 'Boom boom – what can we use to make that sound? Great idea Tommy, you can bang the saucepan with the wooden spoon each time I say boom.' As your child/children become confident with the story, encourage them to add more sounds or movements such as head nods (chicka chicka), foot stomps (boom boom) or tip toe walking (as the numbers climb up the tree).
- Invite your child/children to try climbing a tree. Make sure you choose a sturdy tree with low branches that children can easily reach, hold, stand on and sit on, and supervise your child/children whenever they are climbing. Encourage your child/children to think of some rules for tree climbing, for example only climb when an adult is with you; climb in bare feet; wear clothes that won't get caught on branches; only climb as high as you can get down on your own. Write and draw pictures that illustrate the rules and put them where you and your child/children can 'read' them each time before they climb. Encourage your child/children to climb independently and at a level they are comfortable and confident with. Tree climbing is tiring, so it might help start with short sessions that increase in duration and complexity over time. Try to resist the urge to help them up and down – tree climbing presents wonderful opportunities for children to recognise and develop their own strength, skills and abilities, and to take risks and problem solve.
- Have a game of foot stopping outside. Invite your child/children to wet their feet with the hose and then take lots of steps on cement, counting their steps as they move. What happens later in the day when they go back to see their footprints? Where does your child/children think that their steps went? This is a great way to introduce the idea of evaporation.