



Wee Learn



Wee Explorers (18 months - 3 years): Help Your Child Develop Early Math Skills

Even before they start school, most children develop an understanding of math, addition and subtraction through everyday interactions such as sharing toys or counting steps with parents as you go up or down. In the toddler years, you can help your child begin to develop early math skills by introducing the following concepts through play and everyday activity:

Number Sense: This is the ability to count accurately—first forward, then backwards.

Representation: Making mathematical ideas “real” by using words, pictures, symbols, and objects (for example: Casey was setting out a pretend picnic, he had four cups and plates because there were four people in his family).

Spatial Sense: Also called ‘geometry’, but for toddlers it is introducing the ideas of shape, size, space, position, direction and movement (for example a child going up the slide first and then coming down the slide)

Measurement: This is finding the length, height, and weight of an object using units like centimetres and grams. Measurement of time (in minutes, for example) also falls under this skill area. Baking with children is a great way to teach measurement of liquids and solids.

Estimation: This is the ability to make a good guess about something, which can be difficult for toddlers as their thoughts are more concrete. You can help them by showing them the meaning of words like more, less, bigger, smaller, more than, less than (for example: bigger cup of milk or smaller cup of milk)

Patterns: Patterns are things, numbers, shapes, images, that repeat in a logical way. Patterns help children learn to make predictions, to understand what comes next, to make logical connections, and to use reasoning. Try making a pattern with rainbow fish crackers or coloured blocks.

Problem-solving: The ability to think through a problem, to recognize there is more than one path to the answer. With young children sorting is a good way to practice problem solving.

Math skills are just one part of a larger web of skills that children are developing in the early years — including language skills, physical skills, and social skills. The tips below highlight ways that you can help your child learn early math skills by building on their natural curiosity and having fun together.

Shape up. Talk with your child about each shape—count the sides, describe the colors. You and your child can make and cut shapes and create a game (i.e. jump on a circle)

Count and sort. Gather a basket of small toys, shells, Lego pieces, or buttons. Count them with your child. Sort them based on size, color, or what they do.

You’re cooking’ now! Even young children can help fill, stir, and pour. Through these activities, children learn, quite naturally, to count, measure, add, and estimate.

Walk it off. Taking a walk gives children many opportunities to compare (which stone is bigger?), assess (how many acorns did we find?), note similarities and differences (does the duck have fur like the bunny does?) and categorize (see if you can find some red leaves).

Read and sing your numbers. Sing songs that rhyme, repeat, or have numbers in them. Songs reinforce patterns (which is a math skill as well). They also are fun ways to practice language and foster social skills like cooperation.

Big on blocks. Give your child the chance to play with wooden blocks, plastic interlocking blocks, empty boxes, milk cartons, etc. Stacking and manipulating these toys help children learn about shapes and the relationships between.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2ZfzxD3>

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