

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

- Gather a variety of small waterproof household items, such as bottle tops, teaspoons, keys, shells, marbles, plastic figures, iceblock sticks, coins, paperclips, pegs and buttons. Place the items in a metal or plastic bowl, cover with water and place in the freezer. Once frozen, tip the ice block out onto the ground or a tray in a sunny place outside and invite your child/children to watch it (or help it) melt to discover what is inside. Encourage your child/children to count the items as they melt free and estimate how many more are in the block, 'Look how many things you have now'. 'Have you counted them?' 'I wonder how many more things are in the ice?'
- Invite your child/children to bath their baby. Set up a shallow container of warm soapy water and encourage your child to choose a suitable doll to bath. Use mathematical language and counting as your talk with your child/children about the bath (is it full / is the water warm enough?), the items you need (one piece of soap, one face washer, one towel), how to wash the baby (did you wash baby's two feet?), dry the baby (don't forget to dry all ten toes), and dress the baby (two legs in, five press buttons, one hat on).
- Support your child/children to count features in your home or garden. Counting opportunities are everywhere – steps, windows, doors, chairs, cushions, beds, pets, shoes, flower pots. Encourage your child/children to discover creative or unusual things to count – eyes, pet's feet, wheels of every kind. Invite your child/children to record their counting by drawing, painting, photographing or videoing.

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

Ten red apples

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Az5NHzaF8Q>

Song

Old Macdonald had a farm

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCxrOVSHmlo>

Text: Hutchins P. 2000, *Ten Red Apples*, Greenwillow Books, 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 did the farmer say to the animals when they ate an apple? (save some for me)
2. Which animals took apples? (any of: horse, cow, donkey, goat, pig, sheep, goose, duck, hen)
3. How do you think the farmer's wife felt when the apples were all gone? (sad, angry, cross)
4. I wonder how they stopped the animals from eating the apples at the end?

Play ideas to try

- Create a small play farm to retell the story. Together with your child, make a tree from a cardboard cylinder and coloured paper, apples from buttons or beads, and use small animal figures or animals made from craft objects (boxes, iceblock sticks, cardboard cylinders, pipe cleaners, skewers). Place the story book nearby so your child/children can use to it during play.
- Play a guessing game to the song 'Old Macdonald had a farm' (see the song clip in the resources box). When you sing '...on that farm he had a...', mime or making sounds as clues for your child/children to guess the animal. For example, crouch down low, waddle and make a quacking sound for a duck. Encourage your child/children to guess the animal, and to take turns at giving clues when they feel confident.
- Invite your child/children to eat apples in different ways. Try apple slices, apple slinkies, grated apple, stewed apple, apple pie or apple topped with cream cheese. Involve your child/children in preparing the apples, supporting them to do tasks such as peeling, cutting and grating. Talk about the texture (crunchy apple slices, soft stewed apple), taste (sweet, tart), smell, colour, feel (smooth, firm) and sound (crunch when you bite it). Count the seeds and notice their pattern when you cut an apple across the middle.