



## Count, Group, and Compare

Children are pre-wired to learn simple math ideas, such as numbers, patterns, and comparisons. You don't need to be a math teacher to start preparing your child to be a problem solver. Use your own ideas or choose from the list of suggestions below. Select activities that best correspond with your child's current stage of development. Any activity may be counted repeatedly.



**1.** Count things you and your child encounter throughout the day. Count crayons, crackers, toys, spoons, etc.

**2.** Allow your child to stack blocks.

**3.** Create and identify patterns with your child. Build with blocks. Stack two red, one blue, two more red. Point out what you have made and ask your child what color and number of blocks might come next.

**4.** Let your child help you sort and pair socks. Explain that a "pair" means two. Point out why a certain sock goes with another by identifying color, pattern, shape, and size. When you finish, count how many pairs you made.

**5.** Have your child help you prepare meals. Measure the ingredients in different ways. She will learn that two  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup measures will fill a one-cup measure. This also works in the bathtub or pool!

**6.** Use different colored garage sale stickers or pompoms to make color patterns.

**7.** If you have a vegetable or flower garden in your yard, show your child how to count the blossoms or the number of vegetables on the plants. You can also show him how to tell by color, shape, and size if a vegetable is ripe and ready to be picked.

**8.** Take your child on a *Shape Hunt*. Look for squares, triangles, circles, etc., around your house or neighborhood.

**9.** Songs help your child learn patterns. Sing songs with her that have numbers, rhymes, or repetition in them, such as *Five Little Monkeys* or *Five Little Ducks*.

**10.** Swinging at the park? Count aloud how many times you push your child.

**11.** When cooking, encourage your child to participate; for example, if you're making a salad, ask your child to get the cucumber slices from the fridge. Ask him to count each slice as he adds it to the salad bowl. He'll feel like he's helping, and counting will help develop his math skills.

**12.** Turn chores, such as laundry, into learning activities. Ask your child to identify colors, help you separate lights and darks, or count the number of socks. These activities will help build math and cooperation skills.

**13.** Start counting with your baby from the day she is born! While changing clothes or taking a bath, count fingers, toes, eyes, and nose.

**14.** Play a very simple board game with your child. Take turns with a spinner. Count aloud as you move your marker along the spaces on the game board.

**15.** Play hide and seek with your child. Count aloud as you're waiting until he is hidden.

**16.** Show your child how to sort different colored objects, such as blocks.

**17.** Show your child how to sort objects by shape.

**18.** Show your child how to count the buttons on a sweater or shirt.

**19.** Count steps aloud together when your child walks up or down stairs.

**20.** Draw shapes with sidewalk chalk and ask your child if she wants to trace the shapes or draw her own.

**21.** When you're reading to your child, ask him if there are any animals on the page. How many? Are they the same or different?

**22.** Let your child help you collect rocks from your yard. She can help you sort them into groups. Discuss how you're sorting: by size, color, shape, sparkle, etc.

**23.** When doing laundry, let your child help you sort the clothes by type, size, color, weight, etc.

**24.** When you are cooking, you can point out shapes to your child. A cut cucumber will make circles, and a piece of bread is a square. What other shapes does he notice in the kitchen?

**25.** Which is taller, a tree or a flower? A building or a car? You can talk with your child about these comparisons when walking, driving, or riding a bus.

**26.** Recognizing patterns is an important pre-math skill. Make a simple pattern with sidewalk chalk or by drawing on a piece of paper. Say the pattern aloud. Encourage your child to say it with you!

**27.** Help your child sort boxes into groups based on size. Use words, such as bigger and smaller, when talking about different box sizes.

**28.** When you see a new word as you and your child are reading a book, talk about other words that might compare; for example, ask, "What color is 'crimson' like?. Is it darker, or lighter than red?"

**29.** When you and your child look at a page in a book, ask things such as, "How many words start with the letter 'W' on the page? How many start with 'T'? Which letter has more words?"

**30.** Ask your child questions about distance such as, "Does it take longer to travel from our house to the park or our house to the grocery store?"

**31.** Count from 1 to 10 together often. Pause between each number, giving your child a chance to say the next number first.

**32.** Place some items in front of you. Allow your child to touch each item while you count them together.

**33.** If you're exploring outdoors with your child, count how many leaves, rocks, shells, etc., you can find.

**34.** Have your child choose an action, such as clapping or spinning. Count aloud together how many times he repeats each action.

**35.** After you and your child play with toys together, encourage her to help clean up! Ask her to find three toys to put away.

**36.** Check out a library book, such as *Chicka Chicka 1, 2, 3* by Bill Martin Jr. While you're reading the book with your child, pick a number. Ask your child to look for that same number on other pages.

**37.** Get a piece of paper and hand stickers to your child, one at a time. Have her add stickers to the paper as she counts them aloud.

**38.** Get your family members together in the same room. Ask your child to arrange them from tallest to smallest, smallest to tallest, etc.

**39.** Use words like some, more, less, and none. Is your child having a snack? Count how many crackers, apple slices, etc., he has. When you don't have any, point out that he has some and you have none. That means he has more than you do. You have less than he does.

**40.** Lay some colored blocks in front of your child and say, "Red block, yellow block. Red block, yellow block. Red block. What comes next?"

**41.** Show your child an apple. Say, "Look, we have a whole apple." Cut the apple in half. "Now we can share. You can have half of the apple." Enjoy!

**42.** Play a game together! Wiggle five fingers and place them behind your back. Choose how many fingers you want to hold up and count, "One, two, three!" together. On three, show each other how many fingers you were holding up. Talk about who had more, who had less, some, none, how many you had together, etc.

**43.** Gather everyone's shoes. Have your child arrange them from biggest to smallest, etc. Have her guess whose feet belong to each pair!

**44.** Walk around your vehicle with your child and count how many wheels, lights, doors, windows, etc., it has before you go for a ride together.

**45.** Count aloud how many plates, cups, forks, etc., there are while your child helps you set the table.

**46.** Take turns saying your child's name (or a funny word) back and forth. First, use a normal voice. Then you can whisper his name or shout it. Talk about how your voices can be loud or soft.

**47.** Numbers can be numerals or words! Get a piece of paper and start by counting to five out loud. Write the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 while saying them. Underneath the numerals, write the words *one, two, three, four, five*, and say them as you write.

**48.** Count how many slices of pizza, bread, cheese, pie, etc., there are before you eat. Ask your child what shape each slice looks like. Count how many slices are left when you are finished.

**49.** Introduce terms like light and heavy. Find items around the house your child can hold in her hands. When she holds a different object in each hand, ask which one weighs more. Which one is light, heavy?

**50.** Gather a marker, colored pencil, and crayon of the same color. Show your child they are all the same color and point out how that color can have different shades. Is the crayon lighter, darker, or shinier than the marker? Is the colored pencil lighter than the crayon?, etc.

**51.** Take a favorite set of toys (cars, teddy bears, etc.) and help your child put them in groups. Ask him which group has more. Rearrange them. Now what group has less?

**52.** Go outside with your child. Gaze up at the clouds and discuss the different shapes you see.

**53.** Draw around your hand with a pencil or crayon. Help your child draw around her hand. Compare your hands, looking at overall size and finger length. Cut out your hand drawing and help your child cut out hers. Lay them on top of each other. Is there anything else about your hands that's different?

**54.** If you are going on a long trip, ask your child to count how many cows, trucks, motorcycles, white cars, birds, etc., he sees.

**55.** Help your child if she feels upset about being too small or too young to do something. Ask, "Can your baby sister ride your bike? Can your big brother fit in your little playhouse?"

**56.** Talk about what's happening in the bathtub to introduce comparisons. This helps build your child's math vocabulary and draws attention to what you're doing. "Your arm is dry. Now I'll pour some water on it, and your arm is wet! This cup is floating on the water. When we fill it up, it sinks to the bottom!"

**57.** Count as you wash each part of your child's body. "One arm, two arms! You have two arms!" Count his fingers and toes. This repeated, concrete exposure to numbers will help him understand the concept of counting.

**58.** If you have an older toddler/preschooler, give your child a washcloth and ask her to wash and count her body parts. Not only is she counting, but she's also using one-to-one correspondence, matching one object to another object, to make sure she washes all of her fingers and toes.

**59.** Bath toys can be sorted or put into patterns. They can also be props in math games; for example, line up several rubber ducks and reenact the *Five Little Ducks* song while your child is taking his bath.

**60.** Try these ways to help your child learn and practice math concepts: Show your child a stopwatch and let her see the seconds tick by as she counts them. Measure distances and heights together. Help her count jumping jacks, push-ups, or consecutive kicks of a soccer ball.

**61.** Whether you're planning a party or just getting ready for a family dinner, there are plenty of math concepts involved. Have your child help set the table and count out the plates, napkins, and silverware.

**62.** When you see a yield sign, point out to your child that it has three sides. When you see a school crossing sign, invite him to count the sides (five). Look for other shapes together, such as rectangular doors and round manhole covers.

**63.** You and your child can play a shape game while grocery shopping. How many different shapes can you find? Soup cans are cylinders. Oranges are spheres. What holds ice cream? An ice cream cone!

**64.** Provide playdough (from a simple recipe online) and tools your child can use to make different shapes. She can turn a long rolled snake into a square or a triangle. You can count the sides together. Next, your child can make a ball—in math terms, a sphere.

**65.** Take out a few cans of food of different sizes from the cupboard. Talk with your child about the shape of the whole cans (cylinders) and the shape of the tops and bottoms of the cans (circles). Help him trace around the bottom of each can on a different piece of paper. Shuffle the papers and help your child match the cans to the traced circles.

**66.** Have your child sort her toys by texture. Can she put all the soft dolls together? Can the hard toys, such as blocks and other plastic toys, go in the same group? Compare how the groups are different or the same.

**67.** Help your child learn simple math using colored blocks. Two red blocks plus one blue block equals three blocks.

**68.** Look at old magazines with your child. Talk about the photos. Help your child cut out some of the photos and put them in groups by color, shape, category.

69. Flip a book upside down. Your child may point out quickly that this isn't right. This is a silly, fun way to emphasize that we read books right side up and from left to right. Fun fact for him: In some languages, books are arranged from right to left.

70. Choose and read books with your child that have textures or flaps that allow her to discover the sensory element that books can have.

71. Take a walk with your child in your yard or at a park. Look for special rocks, acorns, bugs, etc. Talk about what you find.

72. Play the *I Spy* game with your child. Say, "I see something red!" Ask him to point to the red objects in a room or a store. Continue with other colors. You could also try this with something shiny, something big, something small, etc.

73. Help your child sort animal or dinosaur toys by characteristics—what they eat, how they move, how many legs, type of skin/fur/feathers, wild or tame, etc.

74. Bake shape cookies. Let your child use cookie cutters or household objects to make basic shapes. To decorate, make different colored icing to show how primary colors combine to make secondary, such as red + blue = purple.

75. Find new activity ideas in the Parenting and Early Childhood section of the library. The PEC section, located near the Children's Area desk, has great resources for parents and caregivers to support their child's learning.

76. Attend a Stay and Play or STEAM story time at the library where you and your child will find fun, simple activities to support Kindergarten Readiness skills.

77. Check the Kindergarten Readiness page on [greenvillelibrary.org](http://greenvillelibrary.org) or try Pinterest for fun activities you can reproduce at home.

78. Go to <http://daybydaysc.org/lets-get-crafty> for early literacy craft ideas from the South Carolina State Library.

79. Model the concepts of less and more as a simple way to show math skills your child will learn in school later. "Today there are more leaves on the ground. There are fewer leaves on the trees!"