



## Tips on Doing Math with Preschoolers

Preschoolers are natural mathematicians. They explore objects and solve problems, and they can understand far more complex math concepts than you might think! The following are basic math skills you can help children learn.

**Develop counting skills.** Counting is about learning the sequence of number names and then using numbers to identify quantities. Preschoolers love to count all kinds of things and can often count to high numbers. (It gets easier after they learn the first 20.) Encourage children to try counting by 2's, 5's, and 10's. Use programs like Sesame Street to show fun and meaningful ways to explore counting.

**Learn about numbers.** The concept of number is the recognition that numbers and their names exist and that amounts are constant, e.g. five apples are the same amount as five fingers. When children first understand what "two" or "three" of something means they will point this out everywhere. Help them use and compare numbers and ask questions, such as "How many children can sit at this table?" Display numbers and their names, and label amounts of things in different places around the room. Children can also match an object in one group with an object in another group, such as a chair for each child, a napkin for each plate, etc. This is a way to practice one-to-one correspondence.

**Understand addition and subtraction.** As children play they naturally begin to separate groups of objects and combine them again. This is the foundation for learning addition and subtraction. You can help children understand and test these concepts as they add blocks to towers, eat three out of four crackers, and add or subtract children as they play "Duck, Duck, Goose".

**Learn about measurement.** Children are always comparing the amounts and sizes of things, such as height, length, weight, or volume. You can explore some of these concepts on TV programs or videos by asking questions about the characters, such as "Who is taller?" Take advantage of daily activities to find out "Who can run farther? Which block is the heaviest? Which bucket holds more sand?" Help children create their own tools and strategies, such as using the length of their hands or feet for measuring. Work together to figure out how many blocks it takes to measure the length of a book. You can also introduce standard tools for measurement such as rulers or tape measures.

**Explore geometry.** Preschoolers learn geometry as they observe and explore the shapes and the relationships of objects in their world. You can help point out and name two-dimensional shapes (circles, squares, rectangles, etc.) and three-dimensional shapes (cubes, spheres, pyramids, etc.) in buildings, signs, household objects, and toys. Ask children to compare the number of sides and the corners of shapes that interest them and don't hesitate to introduce



[www.aplaceofourown.org](http://www.aplaceofourown.org)

new vocabulary words!

Adapted from the educational resource *Learn and Grow with Sesame Workshop: Everyday Math and Science*. Courtesy of Sesame Workshop. You can purchase copies of the full text in English or Spanish as well as similar resources at:

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/educationalresources>