

Everyday Math: Finding Math around You

Regional Educational Laboratories
Appalachia, Central, Northwest

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This activity will teach children different ways math is visible in the world through talking with your child about their surroundings in terms of numbers and math. You can do this in just about any situation, from reading a book together, to shopping for groceries, to waiting to cross the street, to taking a walk around the neighborhood.

Activity Instructions

1. Find opportunities to talk with your child about the world around you in terms of numbers and math.
2. For example, during a walk around the neighborhood, encourage your child to count how many dogs (or trees or cars) they see. Ask questions like “How many dogs have we counted so far?” After seeing another, ask, “And now how many dogs have we counted so far?” These types of questions teach that numbers represent how many there is of something (cardinality).
3. While reading ask your child to count different people, animals, or objects in the book. For example, some books have a mouse or a spider on every page. You could ask your child to count these as you read the story together.

Learning Goal: Help children learn different ways math is visible in the world and apply their math knowledge every day.

Age Range: 3–7 years old

Materials: Nothing! Just observe the world around you.

Supporting your child

Here are some suggestions to talk about the math all around us in our daily lives:

- *For younger children:* When counting objects in the environment, encourage them to keep a tally by counting with their fingers. Encourage your child to maintain one-to-one correspondence. For example, each dog counts only once even if it’s a really big dog.
- *For older children:* Ask them to count and categorize the dogs in different ways—such as by color or hair length. As they grow, involve them in more complicated math talk. For example, you and your child see three birds eating worms in the grass, when suddenly a dog comes running to play with them. Ask your child to count how many birds they saw and then ask them to count how many dogs they saw. Then, ask them to add how many animals they saw in total. Encourage them to count with their fingers or draw the animals.

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