



An Australian Government Initiative

**National Literacy
and Numeracy Week**

**Five ways to build
your child's
numeracy skills K-4**

1 Thinking about time

As a parent, you can develop understanding about time by:

- Looking at parking signs and discussing the time restrictions when parking the car.
- Looking at a calendar together and marking important dates. Talk about how many days until each event.
- Using a watch with a second hand, time your child running, skipping or swimming. Count how many steps, skips or strokes one child does in a minute. Discuss how many steps or skips could happen in three minutes.
- Having your child help set a kitchen timer or an alarm clock.
- Asking your child to make a label with the 'use by' date for meat or cooked foods that are to be frozen.



2 Measuring and calculating

Here are some ideas about measurement at home:

- If you roll a toy car down a ramp, your child could measure how many car lengths it travelled.
- Record your child's growth on a height chart. Compare the height of family members and talk about who is taller and who is shorter.
- Talk to your child about how much he or she weighed at birth and what other things have the same weight.
- Put a can of food into each of your child's hands. Ask which one is heavier.
- Play using household objects, such as a measuring cup and containers of different sizes and shapes. It's lots of fun doing this at bath time.



3 Creating with pattern

To encourage your child to understand the meaning of pattern:

- Discuss the numbers on houses in the street and ask your child to describe what is happening to the numbers as you walk along.
- Encourage your child to create simple dances that have repeated steps and movements.



- Have your child use beads, buttons or pegs to make a repeating pattern and then tell you about the pattern. Patterns could be based on colour, size, shape, or items, for example, *peg, peg, spoon, peg, peg, spoon*. Ask your child to describe the pattern and to tell you how many objects make up each pattern.
- Have your child make wrapping paper that has a repeating pattern stamped onto it.
- Have pattern hunts around the house and in the backyard. Search for patterns in clothes, furniture fabric, bathroom tiles and on book covers. In the yard, hunt for patterns in flowers, bark, the fence and paths. Walk to the park and have a pattern hunt there.

4 Understanding shape

You can develop your child's understanding about shape by:

- Looking at the shape of objects in the home or in the garden. Look for different sized shapes and shapes in different positions.
- Playing stacking with your child. Stack all sorts of things you find, especially cans, unopened boxes of cereal and toys.
- Reading books with your child and talking about the shapes you can see within the pictures, e.g. *The roof on the house is a triangle*.
- Drawing shapes in sand, dirt or on paper. Talk to your child about the shapes using words like *edge, curved line, straight line, square, corners*.



- Drawing dots on a page and asking your child to join them. This can be extra fun if you trace over a shape in a magazine by using dots. For example, you could create the outline of a car or a tree.
- Using a small packet of toothpicks to create shapes and make pictures of objects, such as a house, tent, truck or wheelbarrow.

Enjoying numbers

Here are some tips for helping your child with numeracy:

- ▶ Have a number hunt as you drive. Each child looks for numbers on signs and houses and adds them as you travel. The older children add the numbers as they go and try to be the first to reach 100.
- ▶ Try tipping up a container of toys onto the floor and ask how many there are of certain toys. For example, there might be 6 cars, 4 yellow blocks, 3 red blocks and 1 little bear.
- ▶ On a calendar, write down the weather for each day. Then talk about how many days in each month are sunny, cloudy, wet, cold or hot. It's fun to compare the months.
- ▶ If you give your child the laundry peg bag, your child can put them all into separate colours. He or she can then count how many blue ones there are, how many yellow and so on.
- ▶ You could try asking your child to stack pegs one on top of the other in their colours. *How many red ones could you build up until the pile falls over? How many orange ones?*
- ▶ Play games such as *Dominoes*, *Snakes and Ladders*, card games or board games involving dice. This will help your child to recognise patterns and to count. To help your child recognise numbers, change the dice to ones showing numbers.
- ▶ Help your child to remember your phone number and to press the correct buttons on the phone.

For other numeracy ideas, visit: <<http://www.nlnw.nsw.edu.au/parentb.htm>>

Have you visited the numeracy page of the *Curriculum Support* website? By scrolling down and clicking the *Parents Count Too* link, you will find a series of pamphlets which provide practical ideas to support children's mathematical thinking.

These pamphlets are available in files that can be downloaded in 22 community languages at <<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/primary/mathematics/numeracy/parents/index.htm>>

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