

Preparing children for school



Focus this month – Numbers

Numbers knowledge focus -

- Lots and lots of things to count
- Large and small toys to sort into size
- Water play to explore capacity / sand play to talk about weights and measures
- Growing sunflowers to talk about height
- Sticks which can be snapped and cakes which can be cut to introduce fractions
- Daily timetables to explore the passing of time

Throughout the month we will also work on

- Letters and Sounds aspect 2 – general sound discrimination – instrumental sounds
- Maths –
 - Sequence
 - Recognising maths symbols – numbers and shapes
 - Counting
 - Illustrated songs – 1 banana, 2 bananas; 1, 2 buckle my shoe

Introduction for parents – April plan

Preparing for school focus – numbers

Dear Parents,

Children need a good awareness of number but this doesn't just mean saying numbers in sequence – that is not counting – it means using a pointing finger and counting actual objects and being able to describe their shape, size and position in relation to other objects etc. It is very important that the correct maths vocabulary is used so teachers can build on what children already know – there are lots of early maths website which might be helpful.

Activity ideas to support maths learning might include –

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Your child has been singing number songs and rhymes – playing number games – spotting numbers and shapes on outings – counting grapes for snack and swings at the park – learning about weight and capacity when cooking – tracking the passing of time – measuring flowers and distances – pretended to go shopping and spent money – matching up socks and shoes – finding big and small things – adding 1 and taking 1 away – reading number books – sharing out food (fractions) – exploring repeating patterns - making number lines – comparing sizes – playing games with dice – sorting toys into sets – cutting round shapes - writing numbers and tracing them with their fingers – making comparisons – using opposites language and much more.

All the fun and games your child has been having with numbers is key to learning maths at school as your child's teacher takes their strong grounding in numbers, shapes, sizes and all the rest and turns it into numeracy lessons. It is so important that children enjoy maths – experts tell us that workbooks, when used on their own, can turn children off learning so we use games, stories, songs and role play to consolidate learning or teach something new – and very occasional work sheets as part of a numeracy rich curriculum rather than the only resource we provide.

Here are some games that parents can play with their child at home to support their maths learning and help prepare them for learning at school...

- Reading a number book together – we have lots in our collection if you would like to borrow a few!
- When out for a walk -spotting letters and numbers on the number plates of parked cars. Pointing them out and having a go at counting them together.
- We have 5 on each hand – count them to make sure. It's quite a revelation when they realise there are 5 because then they can count on to 6, 7 and beyond.
- Trying counting a muddled up pile crayons – it's much harder than counting a line of crayons – how can you make them easier to count?

- Talking about the different shapes of numbers – some are fat and some are thin but we start writing them all at the top!
- Singing a number song together and find the right number of fingers for each of the verses most importantly of all – having fun with numeracy together!!

Ideas for how parents can help their child to prepare for school, such as...

- Reading books
- Visiting school for settling-in days
- Letting them get dressed independently
- Trusting them to take risks and make mistakes
- Setting out crayons and paper – and drawing alongside them
- Letting them make their own snack (supervised) etc...

Parents! There are lots and lots of ways you can help your child to be ready for starting school. Here are just a few ideas from teachers to help you prepare your child...

- Give them lots of time to do things by themselves - putting on their coats, doing up their shoes, getting themselves dressed etc. If they take ages then let them start earlier so they have time to do it independently.
- Give them lots of praise for trying hard as well as succeeding.
- Give them the words to describe how they are feeling - when they are happy or frustrated or upset or clingy describe their emotions to them and let them know that it is ok to feel like that.
- Give them choices - what do they want to wear? Where do they want to go? What do they want to do? They will be given lots of choices when they are at school and they need to know how to answer and that their opinion matters.
- Let them choose what game to play with you - follow their lead and let them decide. It can be really hard to let them take the lead but it is important that they are prepared for independent play at school.
- Chat to them and do things together - they will enjoy cooking, helping you to clean up, helping with the dishes (and making a mess). Even if they make things harder they will still be learning from you.
- Read with them and let them read to you - they won't understand the words yet but they can tell you about the pictures and you can have fun making up new endings for books you enjoy reading together.
- Ask them questions and listen very carefully to their answers. Not questions like 'what colour?' or 'what shape?' but questions that show you are interested in what they are thinking and doing.
- Walk or drive past the new school a few times and talk about it with your child. Remember your school days with your child - the happy times - and chat about them together.
- Have a daily routine so they understand that things happen in order - they get up, have food, play, have more food etc. This will help them when they start school because they will recognise the routine of their day and understand that certain things have to happen before you come to collect them.
- Read a starting school book with your child.

Laugh, dance, sing, read, play, go outside, get dirty... children learn best when they are happy and playing so make sure you have lots of FUN!

Maths is everywhere!

Including maths in our daily routines –

- Baking – cooking – includes counting, weights, measures, capacity, time, sharing, fractions
- Seasons activities – time, changes, patterns
- Blocks – size, shape, counting, pattern, dimensions
- Sand and water play – comparing, counting, measuring, weighing, capacity
- Outings – noticing shapes, numbers, patterns, sizes, symmetry
- Board games – counting, recognising numbers and shapes
- Collections – counting bottle caps, buttons, sticks, leaves, gates in our road
- Bottle tops – counting, comparing, making patterns
- Hopscotch – counting up to 10 and back again, miss numbers to add challenge
- Puzzles – making our own number and shape puzzles
- Tidying up – sorting, size, shape, capacity, matching
- Library – choosing books that include numbers, rhymes, shapes, opposites words
- Small world – comparing, sorting by size – shape – type
- Songs and rhymes – including a selection of maths songs in daily sessions
- Craft – linking to maths activities from focussed learning
- Mark making – shape, size, number
- Shopping role play – money, number recognition, counting
- Setting the table – space, sorting, matching, counting, one for me and one for you
- Baby role play – steering the pram round obstacles, space and shape, time
- Sorting the washing – matching, counting, big and small
- Playdough – size, shape, weight, dimensions, making comparisons

Letters and Sounds aspect 2 – general sound discrimination – instrumental sounds

Planning...

1. Comparing and matching sound makers
2. Making percussion instruments
3. Playing instruments alongside a story
4. Playing an animal instrument game
5. Listening to different types of music
6. Listening to and identifying different instruments
7. Playing freeze and go music games
8. Red – amber – green song
9. New words for old songs

Things we do for example -

- Putting together a basket of musical instruments – 2 of each where possible
- Making some sound makers / shakers with the children
- Making a guitar with elastic bands
- Finding a website with orchestral music

Comparing and matching sound makers

Making some noise makers with the children so each one is slightly different. Playing them to see who can recognise their own – and their friends' instrument

Using a box of musical instruments – telling the children to switch on their listening ears and close their eyes. Teaching them words they can use to compare the sounds they can hear –

- Loud cymbals vs quiet tambourine
- High bells or triangle vs low drum etc...

***Extension** – it is important that children remember the sounds they have heard. Playing the game again a few days later and note which children need reminding and which have retained the names of the various sounds.

Make percussion instruments

Making a percussion instrument matching sound game with the children for them to play. Playing one instrument and challenge the children to match it from the box of mixed percussion instruments. Repeating when the children become more aware of the different instruments, letting them lead the game...

***Observing** – do the children know what the instruments are called? Can they name a variety of instruments from a selection?

***Extension** – talking about high and low sounds; playing sounds in different rhythms and asking the children to repeat the rhythms with blocks or rhythm sticks.

Play instruments alongside a story

Choosing a popular children's story with lots of action such as one set at the farm or in the jungle and choosing musical instruments to play alongside the various scenes.

***Observing** - encouraging the children to find or make the percussion instruments they need to tell the story and noticing which children are using their critical thinking skills (characteristics of effective learning). Are they engaged in the activity? Do they concentrate for extended periods as they try to find the perfect instruments for the different parts of the story?

Play an animal instrument game

What instrument does the animal sound like?

Setting out a variety of animal puppets and discussing the sounds each of the animals make and making comparisons –

- Are they quiet or loud?
- Are they high or low?
- Do they rumble or squeak?

As the children explore the instruments, encouraging them to match the sound of the instrument to the animal. Why did they choose that instrument? Could they have chosen another one?

Outing opportunity example – visiting a local pet shop with the children to listen to a variety of animals.

Extension – playing the same game with sea creatures or bird songs.

Listen to different types of music

Playing different genres of music to the children at meal times or during short group times. Choosing music from genres such as...

- Rock and roll
- Rapping (check content for 'parental advisory' first)
- African drumming
- Classical music
- Pop
- Opera
- Indian bhangra etc...

Play freeze and go music games

Choosing a musical instrument and making lots of noise.

Sing...

'We all play together, together, together. We all play together until the music stops'...

Singing – this is the way we play the bells... shakers... drums... on a cold and frosty morning to help children learn the various sounds.

Observing - which children can stop when the music stops – practice listening.

Extension – playing musical bumps or musical statues to encourage the children to listen carefully and stand very still when the music stops.

Listen to and identify different instruments

Putting out a basket of percussion instruments – homemade or bought - and duplicating them in a second basket. Playing different percussion instruments to see if the children can listen carefully to the sound and find the matching instrument from a selection.

Extension – the children need to discriminate between the sounds they are hearing and use language to describe high, low, fast, slow etc.

Red – amber – green song

We lie the children on their backs and we sing or chant –

'I want to ride my bicycle, I ride it to the shops
And when I get to the traffic lights I know I have

to stop Red – amber – green...

Go go go go go!

Encouraging the children to be still until they hear 'green – go'.

To the tune of 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' –

Twinkle, twinkle traffic light on the corner burning bright.

Red means stop and green means go - amber means go

very slowly Twinkle, twinkle traffic light on the corner
burning bright.

Extension – playing some stop / go games in the garden using traffic lights.

New words for old songs

When we are singing a song that the children know, we make up some new words – at the end of the line to start with as a rhyme to challenge their developing listening and understanding skills, for example –

- Incy Wincy Spider – the silly billy spider climbed up to Hannah's head, round and round and round he went and made a little bed. He crawled down her t-shirt and jumped on to the floor. Then the silly billy spider went to Michael for some more...
- Mary had a little lamb – it's fleece was white as snow and everywhere that Mary went the lamb went baa, baa, baa... can the children spot the silly mistake?
- Two little dickie birds – sitting on a wall, one named John and one named Jack... does the rhyme still work? Can the children think of some new rhyming words?
- Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall eating black bananas. Where do you think he put the skin? Down the king's pyjamas!

Mathematics - Sequence

Visual timetables – helping the children to sequence their day by making a visual timetable with them.

3 little pigs story

Making a visual storyline for the 3 little pigs, keeping it simple for the smaller children and adding different pictures for the older ones.

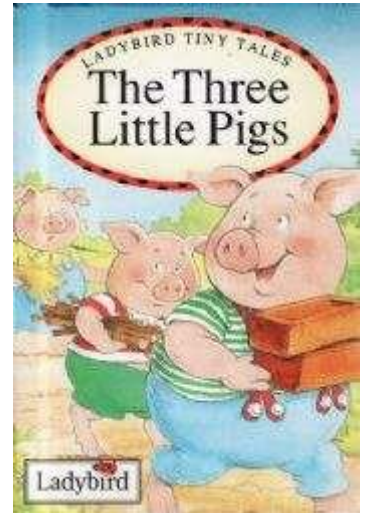
Thinking about the main storyline with the children –

- 3 little pigs leave mummy's house
- They meet a man carrying straw – one pig builds a house – the wolf comes and blows it down
- They meet a man carrying sticks – one pig builds a house – the wolf comes and blows it down
- They meet a man carrying bricks – one pig builds a house – the pigs are safe!

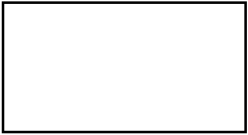
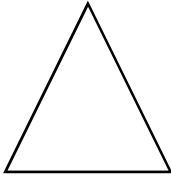
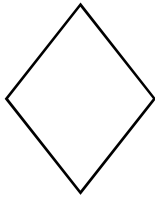
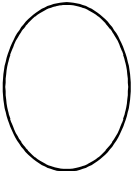
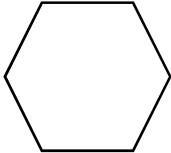
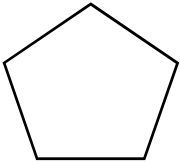


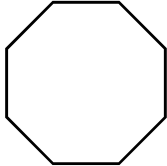
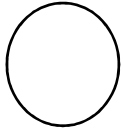
Key words include – before, after, next, during, later, earlier...

Games include -

- Making sequence patterns – red, yellow, red, yellow... what comes next?
- Playing sequence music games
- Making a number caterpillar – what number comes next?
- Playing shape sequence games – square, circle, square, circle...



Colour the shapes and numbers you can name...

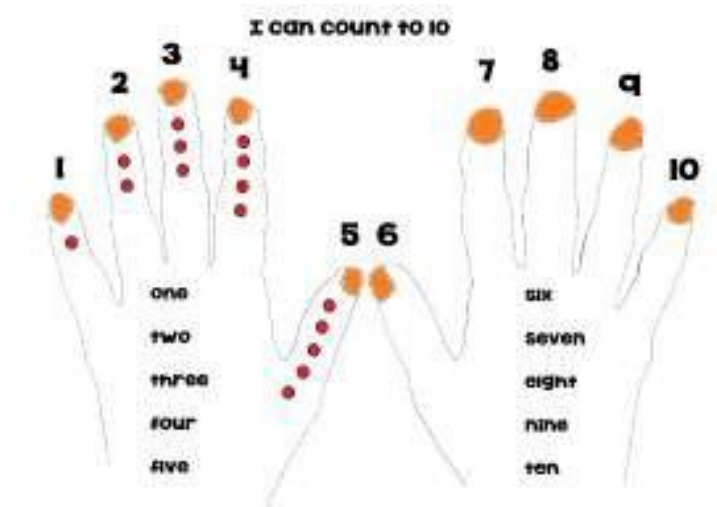
2 two	 rectangle	 triangle	9 nine	 diamond
 oval	7 seven	 hexagon	0 zero	3 three
 pentagon	4 four	1 one	 trapezium	 square
5 five	 octagon	6 six	8 eight	 circle

Asking the child to point to the shapes and numbers they can confidently name - then colour them in. They might like to trace the numbers with their finger and count the sides of the shapes.

Mathematics - counting

Children can usually say numbers in sequence before they have any understanding of what those numbers mean. They are usually copying their friends who play hide and seek or read books which contain numbers. They need to learn that they can count anything – jumps, hops, trains, cars, flowers in the garden, leaves falling from a tree etc and the counting words are used in the same order.

Fingers are a good place to start – drawing round the child's hand and number their thumb and fingers. Playing the 'give me 5' game with the children – high 5, low 5, slide 5 etc. Once they recognise that they have 5 on each hand they are ready to start counting on... 5 plus 1.



Focus book – 'The very hungry caterpillar' by Eric Carle

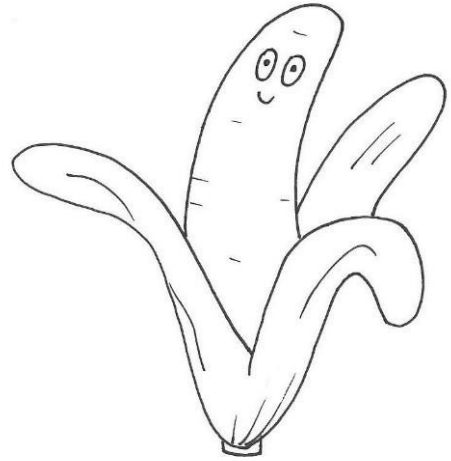
Songs include – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 once I caught a fish alive

Example activity idea - happy birthday to you! Using birthday cards and candles on cakes to teach children about numerals and counting forwards / backwards.

- Setting them out in number order 1 – 10
 - Using them during counting songs
 - Linking them to candles on a birthday cake
 - Talking about the children's ages – and their friends' ages
 - Making a birthday party and inviting teddies – how old are they?
 - Copying the numbers to practice writing
 - Counting on and back – 1 more and 1 less
-

1 banana, 2 bananas

One banana, two bananas
Three bananas, four
Four bananas make a bunch
And so do many more.
...there are lots of different versions of this song!
This is the one we sing.



Example activity ideas – 1 banana, 2 bananas

- Drawing some bananas together – half moon shapes are tricky!
- Going shopping – looking at big bunches of bananas – buying some to use for making food
- Making some yellow playdough and mould it into banana shapes
- Watching the Banana Splits singing the song on YouTube
- Making a fruit salad – listening to the 'Fruit Salad' song by The Wiggles on YouTube
- Making a fruit smoothie with bananas and strawberries – yummy!
- Do the children know how bananas grow? Have they been to Spain or other hot countries where they grow under big nets?

Observing – can the children use their fingers to count out when singing the song?

Support home learning – explaining to parents that we have been making fruit salads / smoothies and share a recipe



Example activity ideas – 1, 2 buckle my shoe

- Setting out props to bring the song alive...
- 1 – 2 buckle my shoe - do the children have shoes with buckles?
- 3 – 4 knock at the door – playing a knock copy game to support listening skills
- 5 – 6 pickup sticks – going for a walk and find some sticks
- 7 – 8 lay them straight – do the children understand what straight means?
- 9 – 10 do it again! Encouraging the children to share and take turns so they all get a go

Observing – can the children work together, taking turns during the song and waiting to give everyone a turn?