

Ideas for using everyday situations to develop your child's skills in maths and numeracy.

Counting:

- Count cars as you walk along the street or wait for a bus.
- Count the cutlery as you lay the table.
- Count the items of clothing your child takes off as they undress.
- Count out the potatoes you are using for dinner.
- Count out the socks that you hang up on the line.
- Count out their pencils, their toys, their sisters or brothers and so on.
- Count stairs as you climb them.

Recognising and writing numbers:

- Look at the numbers on the telephone. Get your child to point to a four, a six, an eight and so on.
- Look at the numbers on doors and car number plates as you walk down the street. Notice what number you can see. Get your child to count to this number, or clap out the number (four claps for the number four and so on).
- Look at the numbers on the prices in the supermarket. Ask your child to look out for a certain number (like fives) on the price tickets, and so on.
- Look at the bus numbers.
- Say you can see a number three, can your child see a number in the street anywhere bigger than this or smaller than this.
- Have numbers with words and amounts in the house (posters like this are easy to come by).
- Your child will be quite obsessed by their numbers. These are things like their age, their door number, their birthday number. Look at the numbers in these.
- Get your child to write out the numbers with water, chalk, in sand or salt, with felts on paper and so on.
- If your child is older than this, you can do the same activities, but using numbers beyond ten, or even beyond 100.

Ordering numbers:

- Give them number cards that have been mixed up (one to ten, or beyond for older and more able children) and ask them to lay them out in the right order. You can even do this with playing cards.
- Say a number and ask your child what is the number after or before the one you said. This also reinforces the understanding of language skills after and before, which are quite tricky concepts for children at first.

- Ask them about ages of themselves and people they know. How old are you now? What age will you be next birthday? Jenny who lives next door is seven. How old will she be on her next birthday?
- Roll a dice, count the dots and ask your child what the number after or before that is? Play dominoes for matching numbers, and understanding the same amount.
- Play a game in the street to see who can spot numbers in the right order. You or your child might see the number one first. That person scores a point. Then you both look out for a two on shops, doors and cars and signs, whoever sees the two scores a point, then look out for a three and so on.

More and less:

- Ask children what one more or one less is of anything, using amounts of things (like one more than five potatoes), and also visual numbers: you see the number nine on a car number plate and ask your child what one more or one less than that number is.
- Ask your child to fetch you one more fork and then count how many there are altogether, or to put back one fork and see how many are left.
- Ask your child silly questions like I did: would you like six cuddles or one cuddle? Would you like five spoons of cod liver oil or two spoons of cod liver oil? This can be quite fun and you can have a giggle whilst learning.
- Children need to know one more and one less than any number as one of their Early Learning Goals in Reception. If you can work on this as a fun game then they will pick it up quickly, just saying the questions quickly and giving your child a penny, a nugget, or sticker for every right answer.

Adding and subtracting:

- When asking children to add or take away, always provide them with something to count out with (Lego bricks, nuggets, dried beans or pasta).
- Give them some little pots to count out the objects, into and out of.
- Make sure they are using their one to one correspondence, and that they are moving the objects when adding and taking away.
- Ask them what adding means (to put some more), and subtraction is to take some away.
- Use language like: adding, plus, more than, altogether, less than, take away, subtract, fewer, how many are left?
- Give your child some pocket money each week, say ten pence, but initially in pennies. Encourage your child to see what they can buy for ten pennies. If they spent five pence, how much would be left and so on. Money is a great incentive to learn about adding and taking away!
- Talking through real situations can make your child think hard as it is meaningful to them: we are having Emma round for dinner, and we only have five sausages, how many more will we need if we are going to have two each? And so on.
- There is so much that you can do for adding and subtracting. Just remember to have something concrete to count with, use the appropriate language, asks your child to explain their methods and explain yours.