Supporting Your 3 - 4 Year Old Child in

Maths

Parent Advice Booklet

What Is This Guide?

What's involved in maths for this age group? In the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (known as EYFS), there are some expectations laid out for how children generally develop in their knowledge of counting, knowledge of shapes and understanding of measure. This guide can help you understand what that development might look like for your child and how you can help them.

This guide breaks down the EYFS framework into sections and statements, providing you with simple explanations of what we call 'early maths' and how it typically looks for this age group. Each area has ideas for supporting your child through fun and engaging activities, whether your child is beginning to use some number names during play or recognising simple 2D shapes.

Rather than a list of must-do activities, you can dip in and out of these prompts and ideas based on your child's current interests and appropriate stage of development.

You can visit the **parent section** of the Twinkl site for even more resources to support your child in early maths, as well as all other areas of learning. Either search for keywords used in this guide or explore more in the early years section.

In early years education, mathematics is split into two aspects: **number** and **shape, space and measure**.

Within educational settings, children will be introduced to number in fun and interactive ways, such as playing games, singing songs and joining in with actions. At this stage of learning, your child may be showing an increased interest in the numbers that they see or hear, from the numbers on a clock, to nursery rhymes or on their toys.

The foundations of shape, space and measure include recognising 2D shapes and beginning to talk about the size of everyday objects using language such as 'tall' or 'wide.' All of these concepts will be taught in engaging, hands-on ways, usually involving songs, actions and physical objects that the children can handle.

Read this guide for practical ideas and advice on how you can further support your child in number at home.

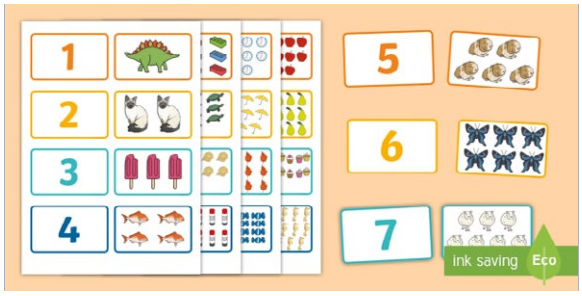
Children develop rapidly in their first five years, more so than any other period of their young life. Although these guides have been divided by age band, we recognise that all children develop at different rates; this guide should not be used as a tick list of exactly what your child should be able to do at this age, but rather as an indicator of what they may be working towards.

Number

From an early age, your child will most likely have experienced some numbers in their everyday environment and through their play. As they enter a nursery or school setting, children will continue to explore numbers through songs, dances, puzzles and games. Exploring numbers practically is simple, as almost everything we do each day (dressing, cooking, eating, exercising or playing) can be number-based.

At 3 - 4 years old, your child may be working towards...	To support this, you could...
using some number names and number language spontaneously.	use number names everyday through routines, e.g. when saying the time or counting objects.
using some number names accurately in play.	use some number names when playing in role with your child, e.g. when having a pretend tea party, you could ask for one cup of tea with 2 sugars.
reciting numbers in order to 10.	use number jigsaws, flashcards or order toys to encourage counting to 10.
knowing that numbers identify how many objects are in a set.	model counting plates before a meal, socks in a drawer or fruit in a bowl to show how we count groups of objects.
representing numbers using fingers, marks on paper or pictures.	ask your child to show you a number on their fingers. Showing 5 is nice and easy, but can they show you 4 or 6? Model making tally marks or drawing numbers to show how they can also be represented.
sometimes matching numerals and quantity correctly.	use a set of number cards from 1-10 and ask your child if they can match a number to an amount of objects, e.g. the number 4 card matches 4 toy trains.
showing curiosity about numbers by offering comments or asking questions.	notice when your child mentions number in anyway and engage in a discussion about what this looks like e.g. 'Your cousin is turning 9, how can we count to 9? Can you show me 9 on your fingers? Shall I show you how to draw the number 9?'

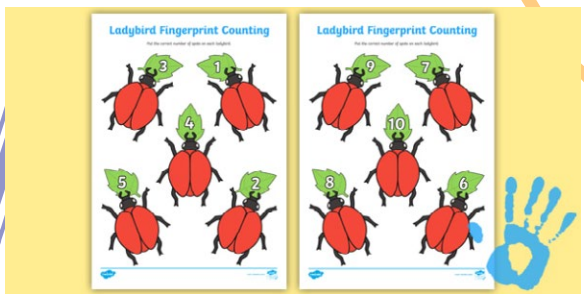
comparing two groups of objects, saying when they have the same number.	when sharing out objects or food between two people, ask your child to count them to see if you both have the same/equal amount.
showing an interest in number problems.	ask number-based problems during rhymes, books or songs, e.g. 'how many little ducks will come back?'
separating a group of three or four objects in different ways and beginning to recognise that the total is still the same.	encourage your child to group their toys during play and ask how many they have. Can they tell you when they have 4 cars and 4 diggers?
showing an interest in numerals in the environment.	point out numerals that you see in the environment, e.g. numbers on doors, buttons on lifts and numbers on a hopscotch.
showing an interest in representing numbers.	encourage your child to represent their ideas of number either by showing you an amount on their fingers, with objects or on paper, e.g. dots or lines to represent a score during football.
realising not only objects, but anything can be counted, including steps, claps or jumps.	Do some exercises such as hopping, jumping or skipping and encourage counting by asking if your child can do 10 in a row and count as they do the action.



Number Matching Game

Counting Scenes PowerPoint

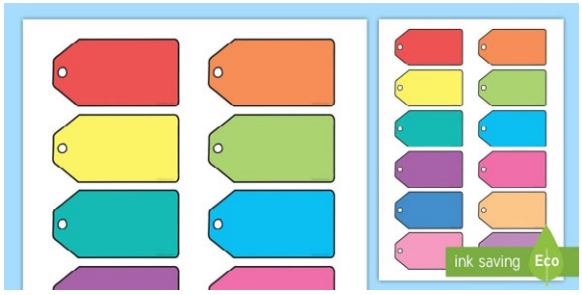
Frog-Themed Counting to 10 Game



Ladybird Fingerprint Activity Sheet

Number

How is your little one progressing with numbers?



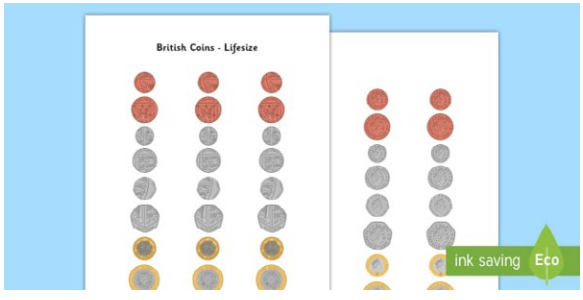
Price Tags

Number hunts are great for your child to practise putting numbers in order. Print or draw numbers (or dots) up to 10 on pieces of paper and hide them in a garden, room or sandpit. Can your child find them all and put them in the right order?

Adding foam or sponge numbers to a bath can encourage learning and exploring during bathtime. Add some plastic cups and containers and enjoy making number soup or count how many cups of 'tea' your child can make.

You can practise counting everything, everywhere, all the time! The more you model counting objects to your child, the more secure your child will become in their counting skills. Steps, stairs, people on the bus, ducks in a pond, food on your plate, etc.

Have any moments stood out to you as a special memory?



British Coins

Shape, Space and Measure

Your child may already be able to recognise some simple 2D shapes, such as triangles, squares or circles. As they start nursery or school, they may be introduced to a wider range of 2D and 3D shapes through practical activities, games, songs and actions. As well as learning about shape, your child may begin developing their language in relation to space (e.g. positional words like behind, on top or next to) and measure (e.g. time words such as before, now and later).

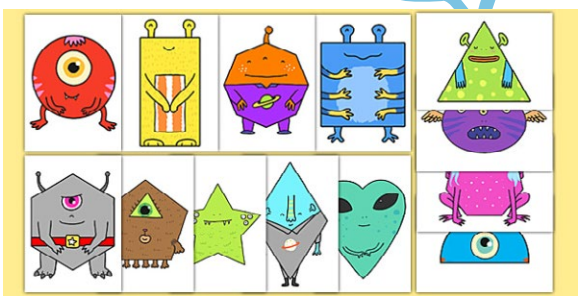
At 3 - 4 years old, your child may be working towards...	To support this, you could...
showing an interest in shape and space by playing with shapes or making arrangements with objects.	provide your child with shape-based toys, construction materials and puzzles. Can they tell you the names of some basic shapes?
showing awareness of similarities of shapes in the environment.	model comparing two objects which look similar, e.g. 'Have you noticed that the tyres on the car are round like our clock?'
using positional language.	play games which involve your child to position themselves inside, on top of, behind and next to.
showing interest in shape during a construction activity or by talking about shapes or arrangements.	provide your child with opportunities to construct with different shaped blocks and magnets to encourage talking about shape.
showing an interest in shapes in the environment.	point out shapes within the environment in order to encourage your child to do the same, e.g. the shape of road signs, foods and toys.
using shapes appropriately for tasks.	model using shapes to make pictures either through drawing, printing with sponge shapes or making a collage with paper shapes.
beginning to talk about the shape of everyday objects, e.g. 'round' and 'tall'.	model using shape language including both 2D and 3D shapes and more descriptive language, such as pointy, straight and long.

Shape, Space and Measure

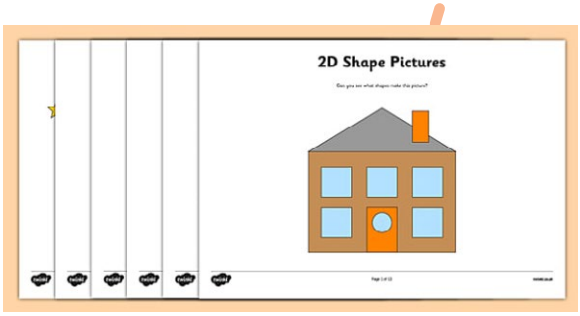
How is your little one progressing with shape, space and measures?

Using shapes to create artwork can give your child a practical example of shapes in action. Why not cut out some simple 2D shapes from coloured card or paper to make a house, face or animal? Foam shapes also make great stamps for paint.

A game of 'Simon Says' can easily involve some positional language practise. Simon says stand on top of the box. Simon says stand next to the sandpit. Simon says crawl under the slide. You could even do the opposite action and see if your child can correct you.



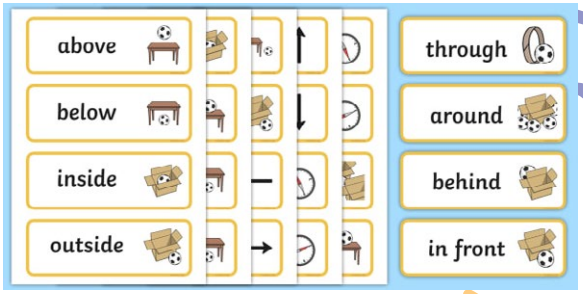
2D Shape Aliens



2D Shape Pictures

Have you tried playing 'I Spy' with shapes? I spy something shaped like a circle... yes, it's a clock! I spy something shaped like a triangle... it's a road sign.

Shape, Space and Measure



Positional Language Word Cards

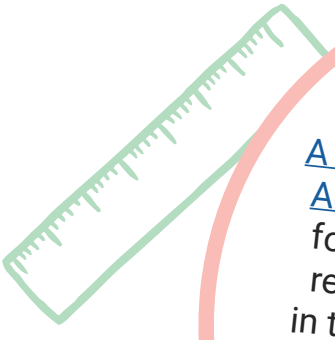
Consider using language of size and weight in everyday routines. Can your child compare two objects and tell you which is bigger or smaller, heavier or lighter and longer or short? What about this pineapple and plum? Or these two toys?

Long and Short Can You Find...? Poster

Have any moments stood out to you as a special memory?

Support and Challenge

After reading this guide and trying out some of the activities with your child, you may find that they require more support with some activities than others. This is perfectly OK; some concepts are more difficult than others and with more practice, your child should begin to make more progress. On the other hand, if your child is able to do most of these activities easily, then perhaps they need a challenge?



A Parent Guide to Early Maths for Ages 2 - 3 may be more suitable for your child if they aren't quite ready for some of the activities in this guide. Why not take a step back and try some of the ideas listed in there first and develop their self-confidence?

If your child seems to be beyond the activities and skills in this guide, you may be wondering how you could help them further. Our next parent advice booklet, A Parent Guide to Maths for Ages 4 - 5, may be more suitable for your child if they need a little more challenge. Like this guide, it provides even more practical activities and advice to further support your child in number. Alternatively, you can always find more resources on the Twinkl Parents hub.

Journal nice moments or record key dates here:

Stick a photo of your child here:

Explore and Discover More

Twinkl Go! is a digital platform, hosting interactive content such as videos, games, audiobooks and more. Twinkl Go! enables digital content to be streamed to your computer or mobile device.

Twinkl Kids' TV is our wonderful YouTube channel dedicated to fun and informative video-style resources full of new and creative activities you can try at home!

Twinkl Originals are engaging stories written to inspire children from EYFS to KS2. Designed to encourage a love of reading and help curriculum-wide learning through accompanying resources.