



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Parenting the  
Preschooler



# Math Readiness

Math is everywhere! There are everyday ways to talk about basic math concepts with your preschooler. The key is to have fun while doing it.

**Preschoolers can understand these basic math concepts:**

1. Numbers: counting, quantity, and order.
  - “Let’s see how many carrots are on our plates. I have 1, 2, 3...Let’s count yours. You have 1, 2, 3, 4...you have more!”
2. Shapes and spatial relationships: seeing and naming shapes and using words to describe physical relationships between objects.
  - “Your sandwich is in the shape of a triangle!”
3. Measurement: size, weight, volume and time.
  - “Look, this apple is bigger than the others.”
  - “That was a long line at the store!”
4. Patterns: seeing patterns, like colors, shapes, textures and sounds.
  - “The zebra has black and white stripes.”
5. Collecting and organizing information: gathering and sorting.
  - “The cheese goes in the refrigerator and the fruit goes in the basket.”

*Math knowledge is important for everyone. When we find ways to talk about math that is fun, we can help children get excited, too. Mistakes are part of the process that helps us grow and enjoy learning.*



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# Tips to Help Preschoolers with Math Readiness

- Math is important to help preschoolers use mathematical thinking. Research shows that their math knowledge before starting kindergarten predicts later academic success.
- Math is everywhere. There are opportunities in everyday life to talk about math like cooking, playing and bedtime.
- Math for preschoolers can include sorting, counting and knowing shapes.
- We can help make math fun everyday situations like learning a simple recipe together or identifying shapes in the bedroom. Find activities that you enjoy to share.
- The focus is to learning problem solving as opposed to question and answer sessions. It is okay if there are mistakes. They help us learn.



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Here are some ideas to talk about math in fun ways to get you started:

- Cook something together. Pick a simple recipe with a few ingredients. Read the recipe and the amounts needed. By age 3, children can help hand you the biggest measuring cup (1 cup) or smallest (1/4 cup) or help identify numbers ("Which cup has the number 2 on it?").
- At the store. Talk about shapes of fruits, boxes, and sizes. It can be a game. How many shapes can they find during a shopping trip?
- During play. Building (with anything you have around, including Legos, blocks or shoeboxes) is a fun way to talk about math. How high can they build? Can they make a shape out of the Legos, blocks or shoeboxes?
- Talk about math during bedtime reading. There are many ways to ask about shapes, size and to count during reading.

Remember, the most important part is to have fun! Your mindset about math matters.

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