

5 Ways to Play with Numbers



PLAY BASED MATHS IDEAS FOR CHILDREN

This Number Day, put away the worksheets and PLAY with maths! These simple activities encourage children to explore number through moving, building, talking, imagining and problem-solving. Use them as adult-led games, playful challenges or add them into your continuous provision for children to explore independently.

1. FEED THE NUMBER MONSTER

YOU NEED

A box or container decorated as a monster, number cards and loose parts such as counters or small objects.

PLAY!

Choose a number card and feed the Number Monster the matching number of objects.

Encourage children to count carefully and check how many the monster has eaten.

ASK

- How many does the monster need?
- How do you know you have that many?
- Can you show me that number in another way?

LEVEL IT UP!

- Choose two number cards. Feed the monster both amounts and work out how many it has eaten altogether.

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2. ROLL AND BUILD

YOU NEED

A dice and building blocks, bricks or construction materials.

PLAY!

Roll the dice and build a tower using that number of blocks.

Roll again to make another tower and create your own number skyline.

Compare the towers as you build.

ASK

- Which tower has more blocks?
- Which has fewer than 3?
- Which tower is taller?
- Can you build a tower with one more block?

LEVEL IT UP!

Roll two dice and build a tower using the total number of blocks.

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3. NUMBER SPLASH

YOU NEED

Chalk, a spray bottle filled with water and an outdoor space.

PLAY!

Write large numbers on the ground or wall using chalk.

Call out a number, show a number card or roll a dice. Children find the matching number and spray it with water!

You could also draw groups of dots for children to match to the correct numeral.

ASK

- Which number can you see?
- Can you find one more than 4?
- Can you find one less than 6?

LEVEL IT UP!

Give children clues instead of saying the number.

For example: "Find the number that is one more than 5."

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4. NUMBER CAFE

YOU NEED

Play food, plates, bowls, cups and number cards.

PLAY!

Turn your role-play area into a Number Café.

Customers choose or create an order and the server must prepare the correct amount.

For example:

3 strawberries
2 cakes
4 cups

Let children take turns being the customer and server.

ASK

- How many do you need?
- Have you got enough?
- How many more do you need?
- What happens if the customer orders one more?

LEVEL IT UP!

Give the server two orders to prepare and ask how many items they need altogether.

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5. NUMBER TREASURE HUNT

YOU NEED

Number cards and anything already available in your classroom or outdoor provision.

PLAY!

Hide number cards around the environment.

When children find a number, challenge them to represent that amount using something they can find.

For example, if they find 6, they could make:

- a tower of 6 blocks
- a collection of 6 stones
- 6 marks in the sand
- 5 fingers and 1 more
- 3 objects and another 3 objects

ASK

- How else could you make this number?
- Can you make it using two groups?
- Can you show it without counting one at a time?

LEVEL IT UP!

Challenge children to find two different ways of making the same number.

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ENHANCE YOUR CONTINUOUS PROVISION

Add a Number Challenge to Every Area

Number Day doesn't have to mean stopping play for a maths activity. Instead, add simple mathematical prompts to the provision children already know and love.

TRY ADDING:

Construction:

Can you build a tower with exactly 8 blocks?

Small World:

Can you put 5 animals in the field and 3 in the barn?

Creative Area:

Can you make a picture using 10 stickers?

Water:

How many cups will fill this container?

Sand:

Can you make 6 sandcastles?

Role Play:

Add number cards, prices, numbered tables, tickets or shopping lists.

Outdoor Provision:

Add chalk numbers, numbered targets, hoops and large dice.

MMT PLAY TIP

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Over Number Day, keep the resources familiar and change the mathematical invitation.

Children don't always need a brand-new activity to learn something new. A carefully chosen prompt added to existing provision can create rich opportunities for counting, comparing, noticing and problem-solving through play.

Play it. Explore it. Talk about it.

experiment, collaborate and explain their reasoning while remaining active participants in their learning.

Play it. Challenge it. Prove it.