



Issue Eight

Supporting Early Learners

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Dear Parents,

Children have the best possible chance to reach their full potential when educators and parents work as partners to provide supportive learning environments. These newsletters have been written by Bev DeMonyé and Gloria Gustafson for parents wanting to help their children at home. You are welcome to email us at learningtoread@telus.net or visit our website www.readwritewithkids.com to view other resources.

Learning About Numbers

Counting, the vocabulary of numbers, number sense, measuring and seeing patterns are all important for young children.

Counting: Take advantage of every day, real life experiences. Examples are:

- Meal times: *How many carrots do you have left?*
- Calendar countdowns: *How many sleeps until Halloween?*
- Toys: *Let's count your toys as we are putting them away.*
- Walking, skipping and hopping: *How many hops is it from the kitchen to your bedroom?*
- In the car: *How many red cars can you see on the way to the store?*
- Clocks and watches: *How many hours will it be until we go to soccer practice?*
- Money, laundry and doing dishes provide excellent sorting and counting experiences.



Rulers, number puzzles, games, magnetic numbers, dice, cards, computer games and dominoes provide counting experiences.

The Vocabulary of numbers: Real life materials and situations help children develop the vocabulary of: one more or less, equal to, add to, take away, subtract from, patterns, how long, heavy, tall, heavier, lighter, the same, yesterday, today, tomorrow, soon, later, next, morning, hours, minutes pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, loonies, toonies, circle, square, triangle, rectangle, over, under, beside, near, far, left, right, bigger, smaller, usually, never, always and sometimes.

Number Sense: This means children learn to use, understand and manipulate numbers which provide the foundation for addition, subtraction and later multiplication and division. Even though children may be able to count to 50 or 100 with ease, they often lack what is referred to as number sense or an understanding of what the numbers stand for and how they can be used.

- With a collection of objects such as Lego pieces help your child understand that a number such as 6 can be shown by adding 1 piece with 5, 2 pieces with 4 and so on. Later they can learn that this can be represented by an equation such as: $2 + 4 = 6$. Use a variety of objects and eventually use the same process to develop a sense of minus, times and division.
- Dice, dominoes, coins and card or board games are fun ways to develop number sense concepts such as 8 is more than 4 or how much do you have to add to 6 to get to 9.

Measuring: A fun way to begin measuring activities is to use invented measuring devices such as ribbons, sticks, plastic containers or boxes. For instance using a ribbon, help your child find things in the house that are either shorter or longer than the piece of ribbon. Later children can use real measuring devices such as rulers, measuring tapes and cups as well as scales. Examples of other playful activities include:

- Measure your children's height asking questions such as *Who is taller? Who is shorter? Who is the tallest in the family?* This can also be done with toys such as stuffed animals, cars, dolls or blocks. These toys can be put in order of shortest to tallest or lightest to heaviest.
- Using the fruit bowl, talk about the biggest apple, the smallest apple and two apples that are similar or the same in size.
- Make dishwashing fun! *Which glass holds more, the least or the same amount of water?*
- Children love to play with containers during bath time. *How many little cups of water does it take to fill up the bucket?*
- Let your child play with canned goods. *Which can is the heaviest? Which is the lightest? Which two cans are similar? Which cans are the same?*
- Using blocks of the same size ask: *How many blocks does it take to cover the area of a placemat, the coffee table or their desk?*

Patterns: Shapes, colours, designs and groups of numbers that repeat over and over are called patterns.

- Help your child recognize or identify patterns on wallpaper, in tiles, on fabric and in nature. Talk to your child about what the pattern is so they can begin to describe the particular traits of a specific pattern and make predications and generalizations.
- Make patterns with your child using objects such as dice, blocks or Lego pieces
big, big, small and then repeated
yellow, brown, green and then repeated
circle, square, rectangle, triangle and then repeated.