

Let's count

Children learn about using numbers for counting when they see others counting. They begin to explore what it means to count for themselves in lots of different playful and practical ways – perhaps with toys in their play, at meal times, when they go shopping, sharing stories or when they sing songs and rhymes.



Learning to count

Children often learn to recite numbers when they hear them again and again – perhaps as part of their favourite story, song or rhyme.

This is a great start in learning the **names** of numbers, although they may not yet understand what numbers mean when they are used for counting – this can take a little longer and lots of practice!

Children begin to understand how to use numbers for counting when they hear them being used to count a number of objects:



- *one cup*
- *two shoes*
- *three biscuits*
- *four puzzle pieces*
- *five fingers etc.*



Opportunities to explore and learn about numbers as part of their play and everyday activities will help your child to understand that:

- we count one number for one object, without missing any out or counting any twice – *e.g. having three potatoes and counting each separately, **one** potato, **two** potatoes, **three** potatoes*
- numbers don't belong to particular objects and that you can count things in any order – *e.g. when you count spoons, the same spoon doesn't always have to be number one, or two etc.*
- numbers used for counting follow the same order regardless of where you start – *e.g. **three** is always followed by **four**, which is always followed by **five** etc.*
- when you count a group of objects, the last number tells you how many there are in total
- numbers can be used to count **anything**, not just similar or identical objects – *e.g. counting the pieces of fruit in a fruit bowl that has bananas, apples and oranges*



Letting your child point, touch, hold and move items as they count will really help them to get to grips with these ideas. Don't worry if they say numbers in the wrong order – this is very common!

In time, your child will come to understand numbers and counting by experiencing them as part of their play and everyday activities.



Let's count together!

Singing number songs, chanting number rhymes, playing number games, sharing numbers in stories and as part of everyday life are all good ways for children to learn about numbers and counting.

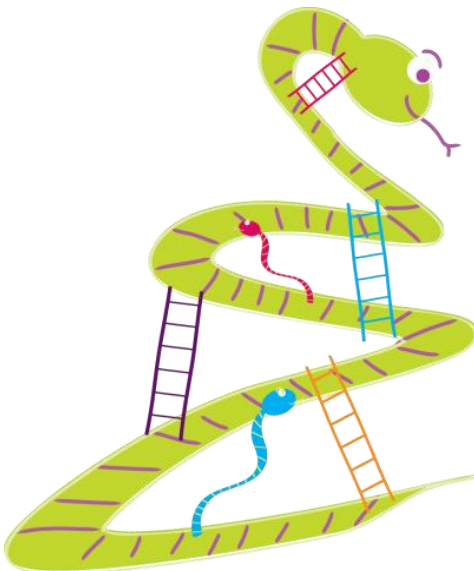
Learning to count needs *lots* of practice and *lots* of time.

Here are some ideas to explore counting with your child:

- climb up stairs, march from one room into another or along the pavement counting – *One, two, three, four...*
- count the number of objects in a picture book and touch them as you count – *"I can see four trees... look... one tree, two trees, three trees, four trees!"*
- sing songs with numbers in them – ask your Peep practitioner about these if you are not familiar with them:
 - Blast off
 - Five furry monkeys
 - One little finger
 - Beehive
 - Fish alive
- count the number of vans, lamp posts, drain covers, cats or dogs you see on a walk
- clap, tap or drum in time with counting
- press the button on the pelican crossing and count how long it takes until the lights change – then count your steps as you cross the road



- hold a teddy bears' picnic where there is a plate of food for each bear and then a bed for each bear
- count things as you lay the table for dinner – *"We need four plates, one for Suki, one for Sasha, one for Raj and one for me."* Then count them as you put them on the table: *"one, two, three, four"*
- count the apples as you put them in the bag when shopping
- use numbers and counting at snack time – *"Here you go... 5 pieces of apple. You've eaten 2, now you've got 3 left. Oh, you've only got one left now!"*
- play games such as snakes and ladders, dominoes or any game that uses numbers – count spaces backwards and forwards.



Children learn about counting as part of their play and everyday experiences – often when they are chatting and having fun with you!