

Maths in everyday routines

Everyday routines and activities - such as mealtimes, bedtimes or getting ready to go out - provide opportunities for babies and young children to explore maths ideas in practical and often playful ways.



The conversations that you have with your child at these times are often rich in maths language – these will help your child to understand maths ideas as well as the words used to describe them.

Finding maths in everyday routines and activities

Everyday routines and activities are full of maths! They include lots of opportunities for your baby or child to explore numbers, counting, space, shapes, patterns, sorting and matching. Here are a few ideas:

Bedtime

- finding a matching top and bottom pyjama set (*matching*)
- filling an empty bath with water until it's half full (*amounts*)
- sharing a story – Goldilocks and the three bears! (*sizes*)



Getting ready to go out

- counting feet, arms, legs and buttons when putting shoes and coats on (*numbers and counting*)
- talking about the sequence of events – putting shoes on first, then coat and then into the car and off to see a friend (*developing a sense of order*)

Mealtimes

- how many bowls on the table? (*numbers and counting*)
- dishing up dinner – lots of peas but only two fish fingers (*numbers and amounts*)



- choosing a round plate or a square bowl (*shapes*)
- pouring drinks into empty cups (*amounts*)
- cutting up long pieces of spaghetti (*length*)

Day-to-day activities

- helping with the washing – sorting colours or matching socks (*sorting and matching*)
- reaching accurately for objects, perhaps toys or a drink at the dinner table (*exploring space and distance*)
- tidying up toys (*weight and size*):
 - discovering they can lift the tub of playdough, but that the box of books is too heavy to lift.
 - finding out that the train track fits into the box, but the box is too big to fit in the cupboard.



Children learn about maths ideas when they experience them as part of their everyday routines and activities.

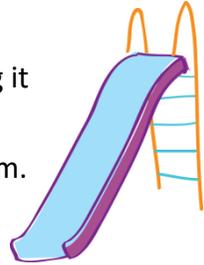
Talking maths

Lots of everyday words and expressions are related to maths ideas! Without even realising it, you'll be using simple maths language when you are chatting with your child about day-to-day things:

- “Do you want some more? I gave you one less as you didn't eat them all last time.”

- “We need four cups – one for Mummy, one for Ayla, one for me and one for you.”
- “Into the cot... 1, 2, 3, up you go.”
- “You’re wearing the same colour socks as me!”
- “We need to tidy up before we go to the shops, and if there is time we can go to the park afterwards.”

Talking about what you are doing *while* you are doing it will help your child understand maths ideas, and become familiar with the words used to describe them.



Knowing what comes next

Everyday routines often have a sequence of events that is repeated each time:

- bedtime might include a bath, story, putting pyjamas on, closing the curtains, bottle, a song
- before going out you need to put shoes on, check the weather, take a coat, pack a bag etc.

The order doesn’t matter – it is often unique and meets the needs of you and your child.

Babies and young children come to recognise these familiar sequences and often know what is coming next. They also get used to the language that goes with sequencing, such as *next*, *and then*, *before*, *after*, *when*, *then*, etc.

- “Let’s do your seat belt up before we go”
- “When we’ve washed our hands, then we can play your computer game together”



Understanding that some things have a particular order or sequence, and being able to predict what comes next, will help your child with counting as well as more complex maths and science ideas later on.

Knowing what comes next is really useful for learning maths.

Snack time maths!

Snack time can be a fun way to explore maths in playful and interesting ways – here are some ideas to get you started:

- Curved bananas, square crackers, Hula Hoop rings you can pop on your fingers, round apples that can roll away (*shapes*)
- Use different sized bowls and cups so you can talk about them – “Can you please pass me the big blue bowl?” (*sizes*)
- Talk about how much the cups and bowls have in them – are they *full*, *empty* or *nearly empty*? Ask if your child would like some *more* (*quantities and amounts*)



- Count out the snacks one by one as you or your child put them onto a plate – “Here’s one, two, three pieces of cheese”, “One for you, one for me” (*numbers and counting*)



- Make patterns with snacks on the plate – or point out patterns on plates, bowls, cups or paper towels (*patterns*)