

Helping Your Child Be Ready to Learn Math

Most children learn to write numerals and do arithmetic problems in kindergarten, first and second grade. For younger children, there are many things that parents and adults can do to help them develop the foundational skills that will build their success for the elementary math program.

The New Mexico Early Learning Outcomes include several school-success building skills related to math. Our goal for each child is that he or she:

- Is learning to count
- Is learning about shapes
- Is learning that things can be measured
- Separates objects by similarities and differences

The following activities can help support your child's development of the skills that will help your child learn to understand math concepts and be ready to use that understanding in kindergarten, first and second grade:

Shapes, Shapes, Everywhere!

Recognizing shapes in the world is the basis for geometrical thinking. You and your child can play "I Spy" different shapes in clothing, around the house, and on traffic and other signs as you drive down the road. Most preschoolers can learn to identify circles, squares, and triangles. And, if you show them the difference between them, they can distinguish between a square and a rectangle. Go on "Shape Hunts" in your house or neighborhood.

Making shapes with materials that you have around the house is easily done as well. Take some yarn or string and cut it into different lengths (anywhere from four to twelve inches). Then, let your child make shapes with the lengths. Or, use popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners or straws and ask him or her, "What shape can you make with 3 toothpicks?" "Now, how about with 6?"

If your child is feeling rambunctious, and has a lot of energy, you can suggest that he make shapes with his body. You can ask questions such as, "What shape can you make with your arms? With your legs? With your mouth? With your hands?" You'll be helping him or her to learn more about math while getting rid of some of that extra energy!

