

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:

What's the Same? What's Different?

Noticing similarities and differences is an important part of determining how to organize and classify things. This is a mathematical concept that becomes important in later schooling. Young children can notice similarities and differences and organize objects by categories in simple ways.

Have your child help you sort the laundry, matching same-colored socks, towels or washcloths. Or ask them to put all of the white items in one pile and the colored items in another.

Organize your child's toy shelf so that there are specific places for different items. For example, have an area for books, a part of the shelf for cars, and a part for stuffed animals or dolls. Then, your child will add a math component to his or her clean-up of toys!

Save some bottle caps or buttons and put them in a zippered plastic bag or a box with a lid. Put them out on the kitchen table and suggest to your child that he or she organize them in some way. You can encourage him to find the ones that are the same color or the same shape. You can ask her to find ones that have certain characteristics. For example, "Can you find other buttons that have four holes like this one?" You may even want to invite your child to show you some ways that he can put the items together. His or her ideas may surprise you!

