

Counting ... as easy as 1, 2, 3?

There are lots of things children need to understand about numbers before they are able to count.

For example:

- . we only count each item once (matching one object to each number as they count)
- . the order of number names always stays the same
- . the number attached to the last object counted gives the answer to the question: How many?
- . anything can be counted in any order or any arrangement and still get the same number
- . numbers are used as labels (page 6 in a book, house number 24, 6 on a clock face – labels for things that have been put in order)

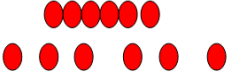

Do you talk to your child about each of these?

Does your child know why we count?

Does your child understand the value of zero?

Counting not that easy and yet it underpins all other areas of mathematics and therefore needs regular every day for every child in every year group (at school and at home).

Here's a guide to help you support your child at home.

From Age/Year Group	
Nursery/Reception	<p>Encourage your child to group things together and count them one at a time. Can they accurately count, even when things are placed differently as below?</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Can they estimate (guess) how many are there and then check by counting? Can they say what is one more/less? Say together counting rhymes and read counting stories (eg: 10 Green Bottles, One Little Speckled Frog). Play games, such as Hide and Seek, which involve counting. Count the steps when going up/down stairs. Count as walking/jumping/hopping. Can they compare two groups of objects and say if they have the same number of objects? Count fingers and toes. Begin to use a large number line for numbers to 10 and then up to 20.</p> <p>Use chalk to draw a line outside on garden path, put numbers on line and child can jump along the numbers, counting them (and back).</p>
Year 1	<p>How many 10-pence coins are in the purse? How do you know you have that number? How do you know you have counted every coin? How could you check your answer?</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>

Count up to 20 objects. Use a counting stick/number line for counting.

Count on and back.



Use Dominoes, dice and digit (number cards) by showing them to your child and getting them to count out that many objects.

Also use digit cards by getting children to place the number on a counting stick/number line in the correct place.

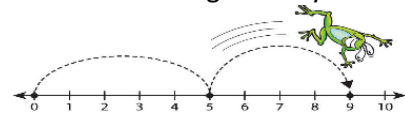
Continue to get child to estimate (guess) how many, eg: how many sweets do you think are in the jar? Then check.

Begin using a counting stick/number line that goes above 20 and up to 100.

Begin counting at different points along the stick (eg. Count on from 17, 18, 19, 20 or count back from 8, 7, 6, 5).

Begin counting in 2s 10s then 5s (counting house numbers is a great way of counting in twos as you walk down the road).

Count on along a counting stick/number line in 1s at first.



(There are lots of websites and iPad/phone apps to support counting. Ask teacher for more details.)

Include the number zero when counting.

Use counting stick vertically as well as horizontally.



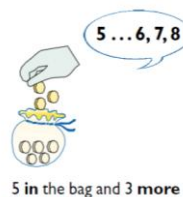
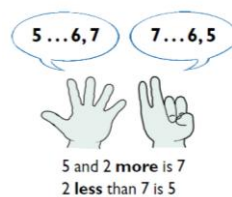
Roll dice. 'Show me this many counters.' Or 'Clap this many times.' Or 'Show me the digit card with this number on' or 'Where would this number be on the counting stick?'



Imagine one more/less spot. How many would there be then?

What are the 3 numbers before this one? Say the next 5 numbers after this one.

What would 10 more than this be? What would 10 less be?



The Counting Stick (& how to use it)



You can make your own counting stick.

You could use Post-It notes to stick labels on your stick.

Your stick could start at 0 and go up to 10.

Or it could start at 0 and go to 100 (each section being 10).

Or it could start at any number and end at any number (eg: 0 to 1 if looking at fractions/decimals in KS2 or up to 1000 when working with larger numbers). It really is magical!

At first your stick will start at 0 and end at 10.



Here is 0. If we count in 1s, what number do you think will be at the end of the counting stick? Let's check. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. (Once the child is counting confidently, the adult may count quieter, or silently and just do the pointing. Ensure children only say the numbers as you point.)



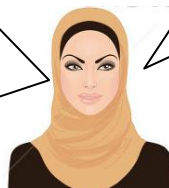
This time the counting stick starts at 7 and we're going to count on in 1s. What do you think the last number will be? Let's try.

Now this time you have to think really carefully because I'm not going to put my finger on every number, you must only say the numbers my finger touches (say the others in your head silently).

And let's do the same counting back.

Now we've reached 10. What would the next number be? What about the number after that?

What if I hold the stick this way? Can we still count?





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This counting stick starts at 0 and goes up to 20. Where would this number go? Place it on the counting stick.



If this counting stick begins at 5 and ends at 15, which number am I pointing to?

Let's count in 10s.



Be careful! This time only say the numbers my finger points to, but my finger may move on or back.



0, 10, 20 30, (finger moves back)
20, 10, (finger moves on) 20, 30,
40, 50, 60, (finger moves back again) 50, 40 ...

What number would be in the middle here (half way between 20 and 30)? How do you know?

This time whisper when you count.



This time use a deep voice when you count.

More questions about counting?
See Mrs Hackett at the homework helpdesk.