

Math Concepts for Infant and Toddlers

When we are aware of early math concepts, we can be more thoughtful in our everyday interactions with infants and toddlers. Here are five basic math concepts that can be woven into our everyday conversations with infants and toddlers.

1. Number and operations—understanding the concept of number, quantity, order, ways of representing numbers, one-to-one correspondence (that one object corresponds to one number), and counting.

- “You have *two* eyes, and so does your bear. Let’s count:--1, 2.”
- “I have *more* crackers than you do. See, I have 1, 2, 3, and you have 1, 2. I’m going to eat one of mine. Now I have the *same* as you!”
- “That’s the *third* time I’ve heard you say mama. You’ve said mama three times!”

2. Shapes and spatial relationships (geometry)—recognizing and naming shapes, understanding the physical relationship between yourself and other objects and the relationships between objects.

- “Look, Jason went *under* the climber and Aliyah is on *top*!”
- “You’re sitting *next to* your brother.”
- “Some of the crackers we have today are *square*, and some are *round*.”

3. Measurement—size, weight, quantity, volume, and time.

- “Moving that chair is hard. It’s *heavy*.”
- “Your nap lasted a *long* time today!”
- “Let’s count how *many* steps it takes to reach the mailbox.”

4. Patterns, relationships, and change—recognizing (seeing the relationships that make up a pattern) and/or creating repetitions of objects, events, colors, lines, textures, and sounds; understanding that things change over time and that change can be described with math words. These are the basic building blocks of algebra!

- “Daddy has stripes on his shirt—*white, blue, white, blue, white, blue*.”
- “Let’s clap to the *beat* of this song.”
- “I put the blocks *in* the bucket; you dump them *out*. I put the blocks back *in* the bucket; you dump them *out*!”
- “Our plant looks *taller* today. I think it grew overnight.”

5. Collecting and organizing information—gathering, sorting, classifying, and analyzing information (data) to help make sense of what is happening in the environment.

- “Let’s put the *big* lid on the *big* bowl and the *small* lid on the *small* bowl.”
- “You *always* smile when Mommy sings to you!”

- "Let's put the *dolls in the basket* and the *balls in the box*."

RESOURCE: <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/math-talk-infants-and-toddlers>