

# Counting at a Glance

## What Is Counting?

Counting helps us answer the question “How many?” This includes things we can see and touch as well as things we can’t see, like days of the week. Counting also helps us compare sets of things so we can figure out if there is more or less of something. This is important if I think you got more cookies than I did!

## Why Is Learning About Counting Important?

Counting is an important foundation in mathematics. Many math skills build on children’s ability to count. Counting is helpful for problem solving and is the foundation of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

## What Do Children Need to Know About Counting?

To count correctly, children need to be able to:

- Know and use number words in order (“One, two, three...”).
- Use each number word only once as they count each thing (a skill that is called one-to-one correspondence).
- Know that the last number word they say when they are done counting is how many things there are (“One, two, three, four. There are four doggies in the park!”).
- Know that it doesn’t matter in which order you count things, there will always be the same amount.

## How Can We Help Children Learn Counting?

### Talk About Counting Throughout the Day

Provide meaningful opportunities to count, such as counting to ensure toys and materials are shared fairly, playing games like Hide-and-Seek or I’m Thinking of a Number (“I’m thinking of a number that is less than 11”), and collecting and counting objects during outside time.

### Ideas for Exploring Counting During:

#### Centers/Small Groups

**Follow the Path:** Children roll a die and use the counting-on strategy to move their piece forward on the game board. The level of challenge can be adjusted by changing the length of the board.

#### Guided Small Groups

**Cookie Game:** Children “make” a chocolate chip cookie by rolling a die that tells them how many chocolate chips to count out and put on their cookie.

#### Math Moments

**Counting Clean-Up:** Ask children to put away a certain number of items at a time as they tidy toys and materials. Help children use the counting sequence as they work.

## How Can We Support Learning About Counting at Home?

Children need many opportunities to say the counting words and use them to count things. Thankfully, counting opportunities are all around us. Encourage families to:

- **Count as they set the table:** “I need one, two, three, four, five...five forks!”
- **Count food items at the grocery store as you put them in the cart:** “Here are one, two, three potatoes.”
- **Count other items:** For example, count soccer goals, jumps with a jump rope, bubbles blown, steps on the stairs, or books to check out from the library.

