

Making Five Acorns

Explore different ways to make the number five while helping the squirrel gather its acorns for winter.



Materials

- 27 acorn cards numbered 1 through 4: nine 1's, eight 2's, eight 3's, two 4's. The cards can show [acorns and numerals](#), or [acorns only](#).
- **Optional:** Picture of a squirrel (such as [this example](#)), or a stuffed toy squirrel.

Setup — Less than 5 minutes

- Shuffle and place the cards face down in a pile between the players.
- If using a squirrel, place the squirrel off to the side, propped up, or on the floor.
- Print the + and - cards and place them facedown by game board.

Instructions for a 2-Player Game

1. It is ideal that the teacher starts out as one of the players.
2. Each player draws 7 cards and lays them on the table.
3. Player 1 puts down a number card. Player 2 puts down a number card or cards that when added to that number make 5 (e.g., if a 3 is put down, the next player can put down a 2 or two 1's).
4. If Player 2 does not have cards to make 5, they draw cards until they have cards to make 5.
5. Repeat steps until someone runs out of cards. The squirrel now has their acorns for the winter!

Instructions for a 3-Player Game

1. Each player draws 5 cards and lays them on the table.
2. Player 1 puts down a number card. Player 2 puts down a number card or cards that add to that number to make 5 (e.g., if a 3 is put down, the next player can put down a 2 or two 1's).

Making Five Acorns

Explore different ways to make the number five while helping the squirrel gather its acorns for winter.



Instructions for a 3-Player Game (Continued)

3. If Player 2 does not have cards to make 5, they draw cards until they can make 5.
4. Once 5 is made, take the cards and give them to the squirrel so they can store up acorns.
5. Player 2 goes next in laying down the first number. Player 3 puts down a card(s) that add to that number to make 5, repeating the above steps.
6. Player 3 goes next in laying down the first number. Player 1 puts down a card(s) that add to that number to make 5, repeating the above steps.
7. Repeats steps until someone runs out of cards. The squirrel now has their acorns for winter!

Checks for Understanding

To deepen children's learning about early math concepts, talk and ask questions while doing this activity together. Here are some examples to get you started.

Counting and Cardinality

- "How many dots do you see on that card?"
- "How many sets of 5 did you make?"

Numeral Recognition

- "What number is that?"

Composing and Decomposing Numbers

- "How can you figure out how many more you need to make 5?"
- "If you have a 2, what do we need to make 5?"
- "What are 2 numbers that make 5?"
- "Could we use 3 numbers to make 5?"



Activity Modifications

Once you have tried out the activity, here are some other things you can do. Try these modifications to keep the activity interesting and challenging for children all year.

Introduce a Variation

- Using [numeral cards](#), have children count on counters that match the numeral cards to feed the animal. Place the groups of 5 counters by the animal.

Make It Easier

- Have children draw fewer cards.
- Have children focus on making 3 or 4 instead of 5.
- Use cards with only dots.
- Give each child four number cards (1, 2, 3, and 4). Play with just those cards.

Make It Harder

- Use cards with only numerals.

- Have children draw 8-10 cards instead of 7 cards.
- Record ways they make 5 (or another number) on a recording sheet.
- Use number cards to make larger numbers, such as 6 through 10, using the same deck of 1-4 cards or creating a new deck with some higher numbers.
- Have children count the number of sets they made.