

Simple advice on helping a pre-school child to do maths...

In children's first years, we parents can really have a profound effect on their mathematical enthusiasm and attainment. Not by 'teaching them maths' - arguably this will put them off or confuse them! But by being sensitive to all those day-to-day situations in which mathematical ideas arise or mathematical skills can be practised. Such skills and concepts include:

- **Counting as you go** - chanting the numbers one to ten whenever it feels natural to do so! On the stairs, doing up buttons, walking along a wall...
- **Finding how many** - counting and touching the objects in a set to find how many. How many cars on my road? Marbles on the run? Crisps on my plate? Remember to show children how we touch each one as we count it - this avoids making mistakes!
- **Recognising numbers** - point out numbers wherever you see them: on buses and houses, in the pages of books, on birthday cards, as scores...
- **Recognising arrays** - these are arrangements of dots, pictures or objects that children can come to identify without counting them. 'That's two,' pointing at 2 drinks, and 'I threw a four!' about a dice throw.
- **Sequencing and ordering** - threading beads, creating patterns and above all, sequencing actions and sounds (clap hands, jump, wave) all help children to get the hang of this vital concept.
- **Sorting** - the more children can classify things and explain their thinking, the better their mathematical reasoning will be. 'These are red, these are squares, and these special ones are red squares!'