



Helping your child with literacy and numeracy at home

NSW Department of Education



This booklet has been created for parents, carers and families of children in the early years of school.

It is full of activities to support the important learning that happens at home. The activities are designed for you to have fun with your child and to help them have a great start at school.

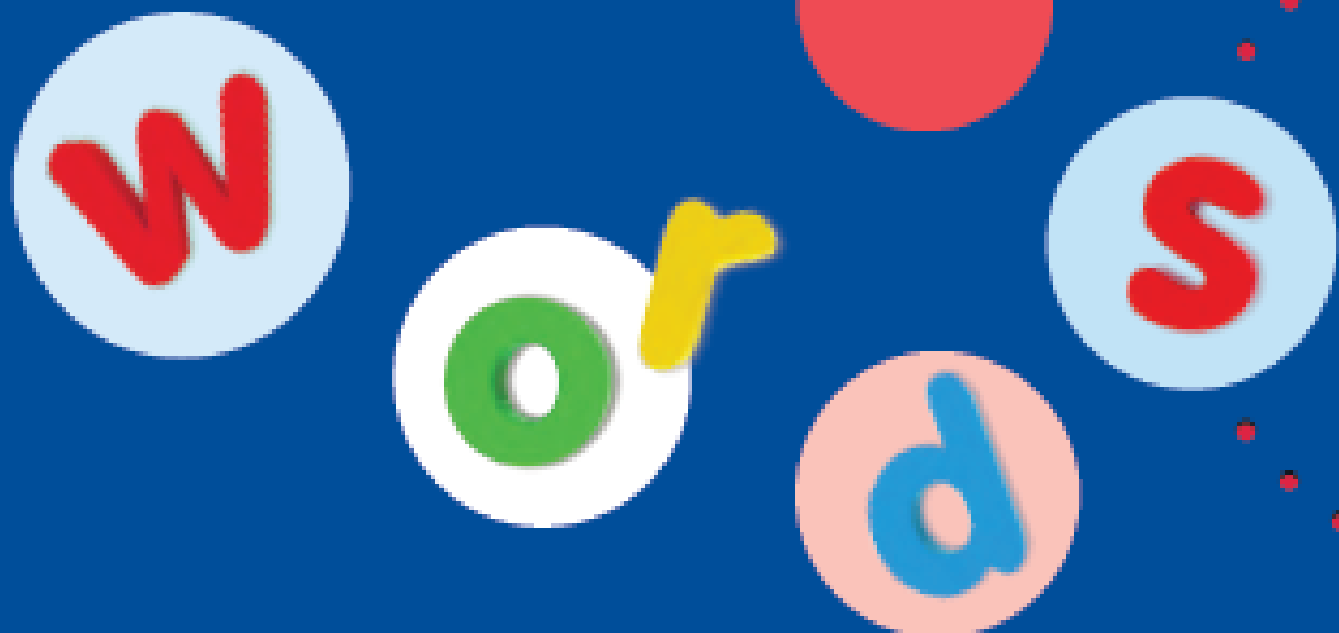
Encourage your child to participate and explore the activities and support their individual responses.



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Literacy

Helping your child develop their literacy skills

Literacy involves listening, speaking, reading, writing and spelling. It is the ability to communicate thoughts and emotions, ideas and opinions and to make meaning from spoken and written messages.



Speaking and listening

Speaking and listening skills build the foundation for your child's learning at school. These skills help a child to be able to talk with others, create friendships and actively participate in all activities at school.

If you speak a language other than English at home it's important you continue to support your child to use their home language.

Talking with your child

- **Talk with your child** about a range of topics, for example things that happen each day.
- **Share stories** from your culture, your own stories and your children's stories.
- **Describe or talk about things** as they are happening. For example, "We are going to walk to school today and go past the park."
- **Listen to your child and encourage them to take turns.** Show how to listen and interact in a conversation.
- **When starting a conversation or when talking with your child ask questions** that require more than a yes or no reply. For example, "What did you do at school today?"
- **Use questions that start with how or why.** For example, "How many birds do you see in the park?"
- **When asking questions give your child time to answer.**
- **Make conversations fun.** Make up funny or nonsense rhymes, talk and sing with your child.

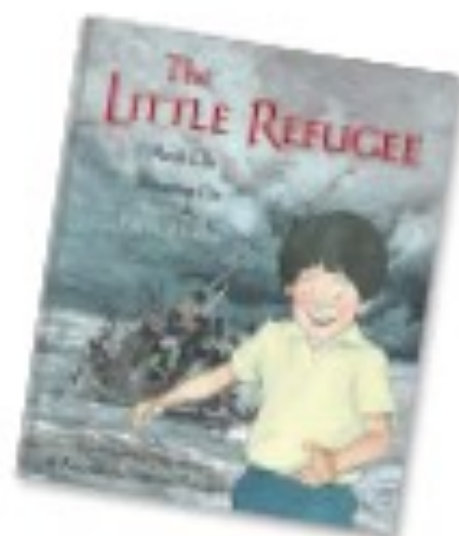


Communicating a message

- **Retell a story.** Talk about what happened at the beginning, middle and end of the story.
- **After reading, talk about the characters or your child's favourite part of the book.**
- **Share ideas on what might happen when going to an event like a celebration or going to school.** After the event, talk about what happened and ask them to share their thoughts and feelings.
- **Support your child to create their own story** from their imagination. Ask questions such as, "What is the story about?" "Who is in the story?" "What happens in the story?"
- **Teach your child their full name, address, age, birthday and phone number.**
- **After school ask your child how their day was and ask for more information, for example, "Why did you feel that way?"**



Books for conversation and word-building



Word building

- Use describing words when talking. If your child says, "There's a dog." Add description such as, "That's a small, fluffy, white dog."
- Build on your child's language by teaching them new words. If your child says "The house is big", you could say "Yes, the house is large" or "The house is enormous".
- When reading with your child talk about the words used in books. Discuss together the meaning of the words. You might also like to find new, interesting words to talk about.
- Practise using new words in a sentence.
- Make labels for things around the house.





Reading

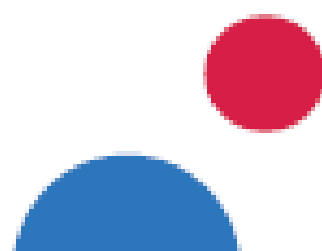
Children learn from being read to, reading with others and reading to themselves.

Have fun reading together every day. Look for opportunities such as when you are walking to school, the book shop, the library and the supermarket.

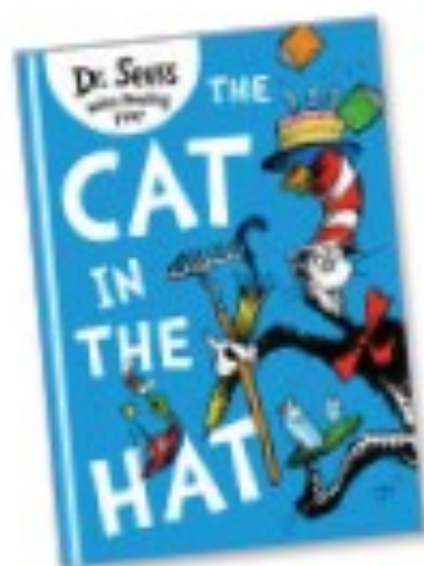
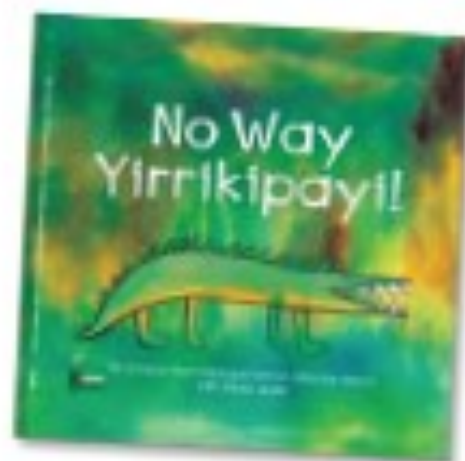
Talk about stories, the language used, words in the story, as well as the sounds of letters in words. Read books in your home language.

Read with your child every day

- Make reading fun and enjoyable. Children learn about reading by watching, copying and interacting with others.
- Let your child choose and re-read books they are interested in.
- Talk about the book before you start reading. Talk about the title and what could happen in the story.
- Discuss the pictures and how they add to the story.
- Whilst reading ask your child questions about the story such as, "What do you think might happen next?" "Why do you think that?"
- After reading talk about the story. Ask questions such as, "Which part of the story did you like best?" or "What was exciting, funny or sad in the story?"
- Take turns at reading favourite stories with brothers, sisters or friends.
- Choose a variety of reading materials such as newspapers, magazines, posters, street signs, recipes and shopping lists.



Books that have rhyme

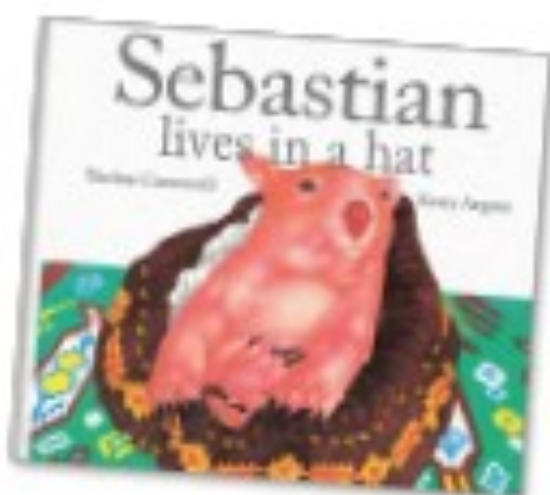
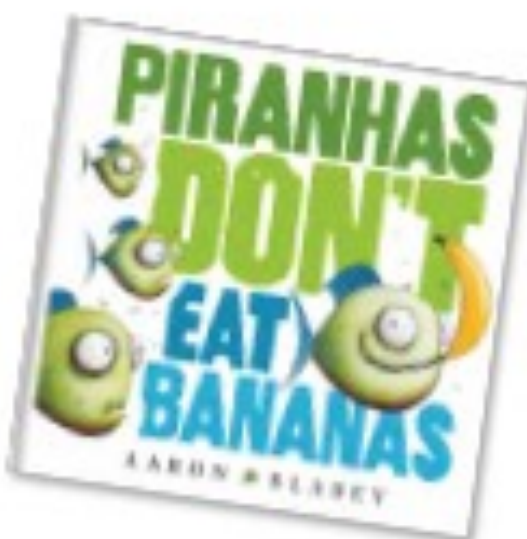


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Having fun with reading, language and words

- Choose books that have rhymes or riddles in them.
- Talk about rhyming words. Cat, hat, sat, bat are all examples of words that rhyme because they sound the same at the end.
- Play with rhyming words and play rhyming games. Make silly rhyming sentences such as, "Have you ever seen a snail deliver the mail?"



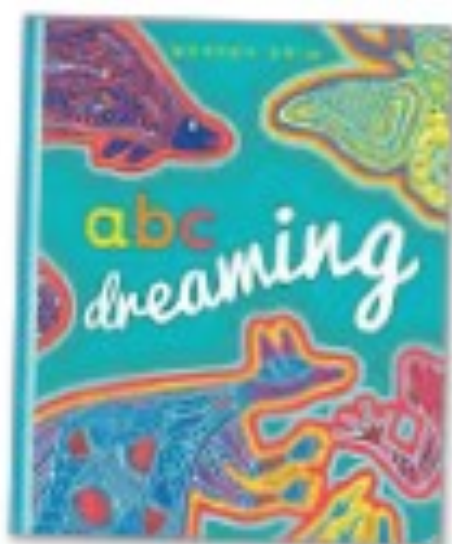
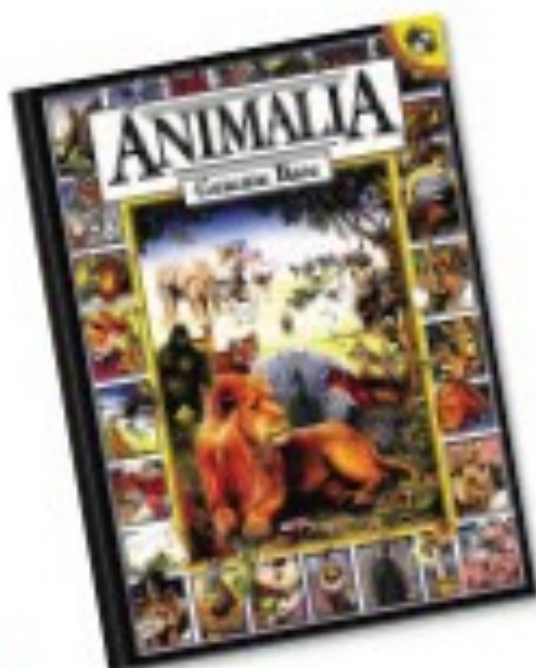
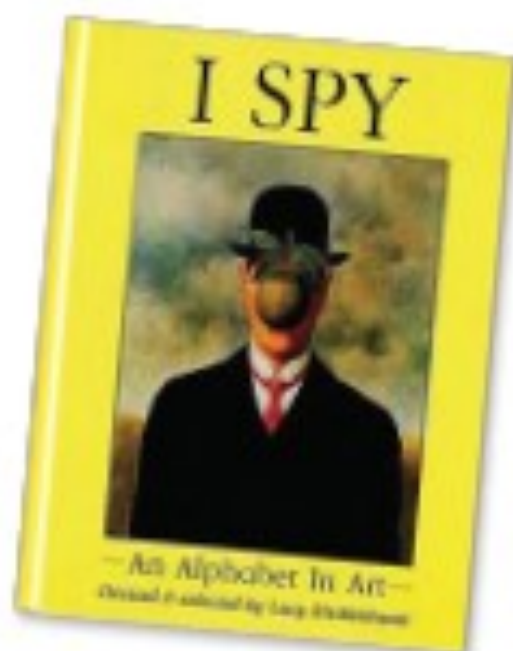
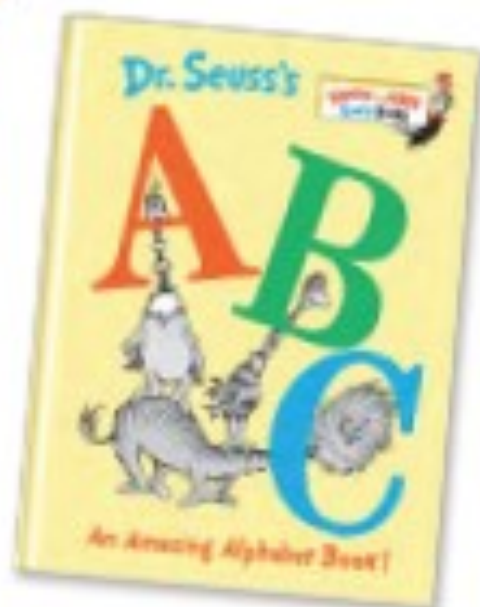
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Play with the sounds of letters

- **Have fun with the sound of letters.** Make up silly sentences using words that start with the same sound such as, "Many mice munching meatballs."
- **Make words with letters cut out of magazines, or written on post-it notes and break the word into sounds,** for example, b-a-t. Then say the word again.
- **When you are reading to your child, ask them to point to and say the sounds they know.**
- **Play sound games with your child's name.** Ask questions such as, "What sound does your name start with?" "Is it the same sound at the beginning of dad?"

Books about letters



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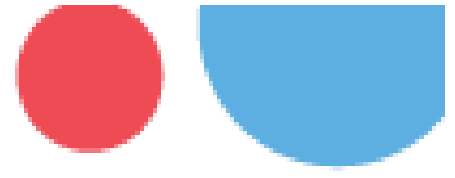


Drawing and writing

Encourage your child to draw and write about interesting things.

Ask your child to talk about their drawings, and writing. Be interested in their stories and how they have chosen to draw or write them.

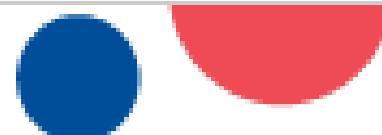




Write every day

- **Have fun with drawing and writing.** Ask your child to draw or write about things they like to do, make or play.
- **Encourage your child to talk about their writing.** This could include talking about their scribbles, drawings, letters or words.
- **Use different materials** to draw and write with such as chalk, paper and pencils, markers, pens and keyboards.
- **Ask your child to write their name.** Your child could also attempt to write the names of other people who are important to them.
- **While your child is writing or drawing talk about the picture and the sounds of the letters** that he or she is attempting to write.
- **Encourage your child to use their imagination and create stories.** They could create a storybook by drawing pictures and writing words for the story.
- **Support your child to write messages in their home language.**





Drawing and writing for a purpose

- Encourage your child to draw or write a shopping list, or about their favourite person in the family, or their favourite book.
- Create a song or a poem and write the words or draw a picture to go with the song or poem.
- Ask your child to describe what they are drawing or writing about as they are creating it.
- Encourage them to write a letter to a friend or someone in the family about something interesting, funny or exciting that happened.
- Have a booklet, journal or diary that your child can write or draw in daily.
- Create a card or an invite for a celebration or a special event.

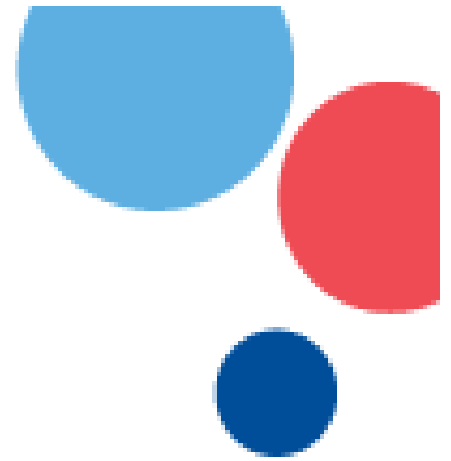


Talk about messages

- Ask your child to **create a message** they would like to send. It could be a poster such as, "Beware of the dog", or a letter to their teacher about the things they like to do.
- **Use everyday words** that are part of your child's culture, experience and interests.
- **Talk about stories or letters** that your child has written or that you read together.
- When talking, support your child to **talk in sentences using a variety of words**.







Numeracy

Helping your child develop their numeracy skills

Numeracy involves being able to understand how numbers work in everyday situations.

We see and use numbers daily. When reading there are numbers on the page, our house has a number and when we buy something we add and subtract numbers.

Help your child to develop a positive attitude towards numeracy.

It's important to build numeracy skills in your home language.



Numbers and counting

An early skill children develop is counting.
Counting includes:

- saying and recalling numbers in the correct order
- matching number words to objects
- knowing that the last number counted represents the total number of objects.

Words to use

- count forward, count backwards
- number before, number after
- more than, less than
- is the same as

0 zero

1 one

2 two

3 three

4 four

5 five

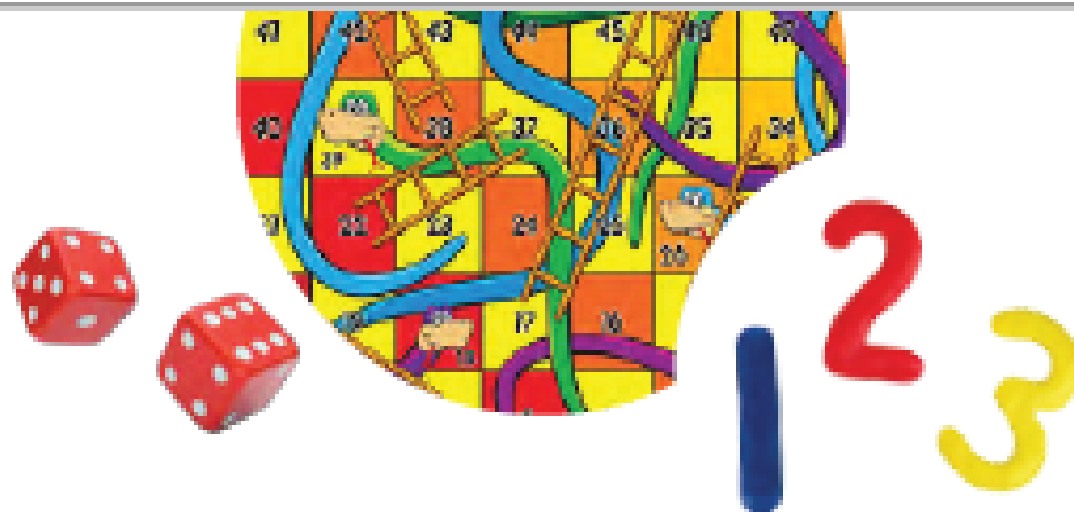
6 six

7 seven

8 eight

9 nine

10 ten

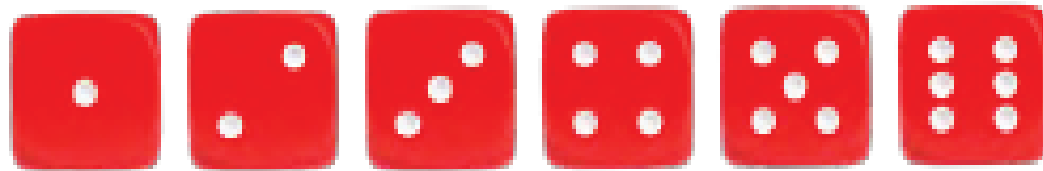


Activities to encourage learning about numbers

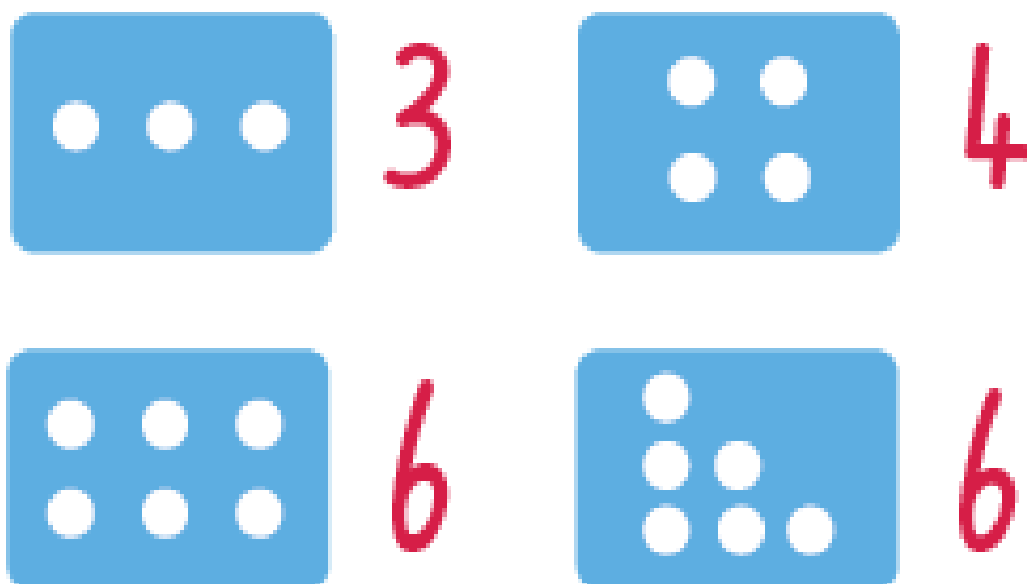
- Use dice that have numbers and dots to help your child recognise numbers and amounts. Ask your child, "How many dots are on the dice?"
- Play board games together that use dice and counting.
- Read and share stories. Talk about counting, amounts, and the numbers you see in a book, including the page numbers.
- Ask your child to find numbers when going on a walk. Ask your child, "What numbers can you see?" Talk about house numbers, car number plates and street signs.
- Talk about the numbers on everyday items such as clocks and phones. Help your child to recall helpful numbers.

Recognising the number of objects or dots

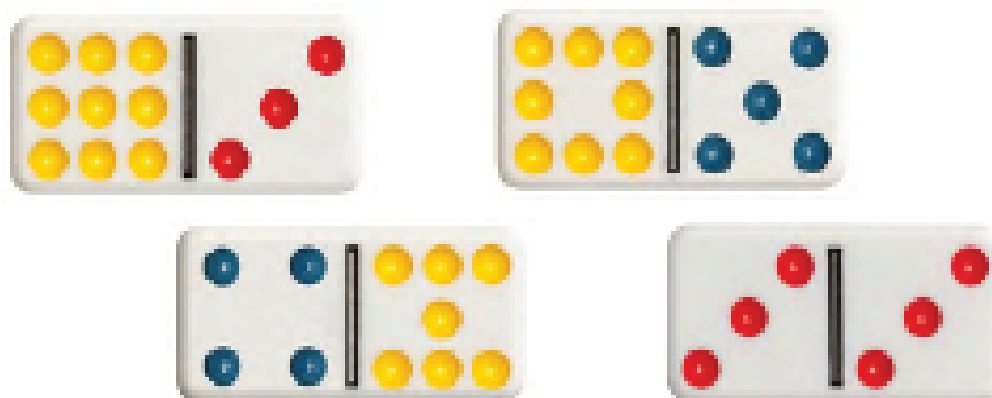
Dice dot patterns



Dot patterns



Domino dot patterns

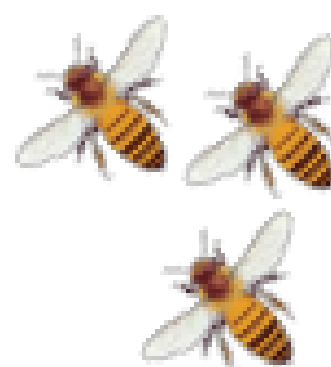


Counting with your child

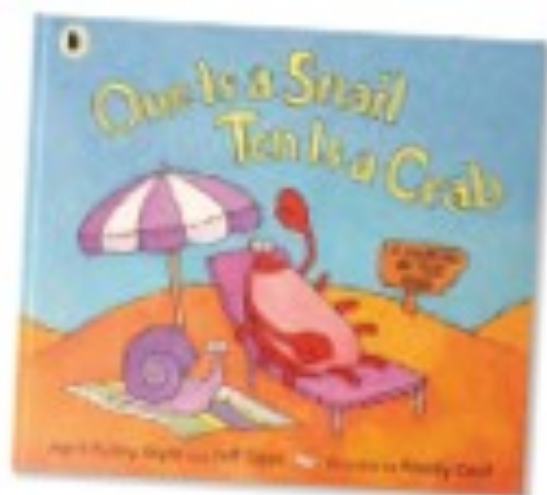
- **Count when you do things around the house.** Cook simple recipes together and get your child to count out the ingredients.
- **Encourage your child to help set the table** for a family meal. Ask them to count the people, and the plates, cups, forks and spoons needed for the table.
- **Count with your child** the number of buttons as they do up their school shirt.
- **Ask your child to count** how many items are in their lunch box.
- **Count forward.** Count everyday items such as cars, houses, shoes and bags.
- **Count backwards.** Going downstairs then upstairs. 10, 9, 8

Counting songs

- Here is the Beehive
- Five Little Ducks
- The Ants Go Marching
- One, Two, Buckle My Shoe
- Five Cheeky Monkeys Jumping on the Bed
- Ten Green Bottles



Books about numbers and counting





Adding and subtracting

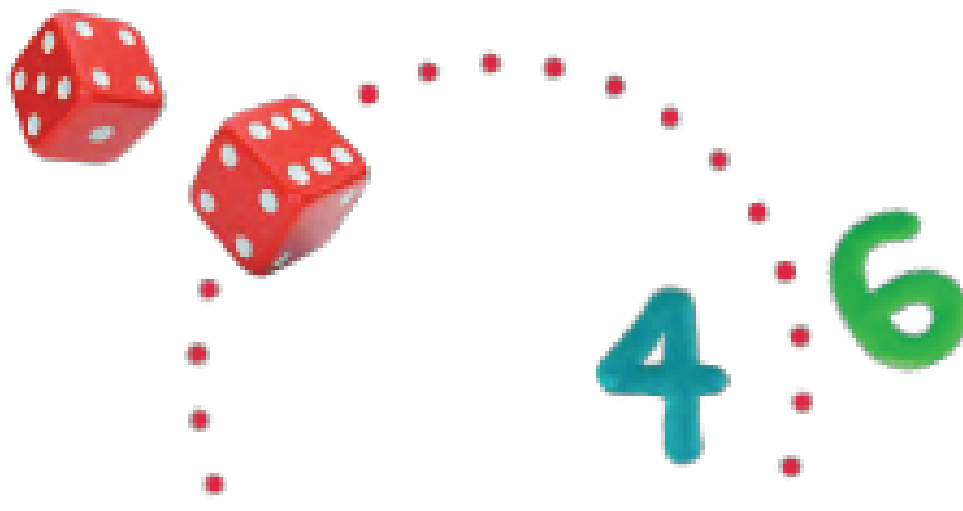
Young children need to develop a sense of addition and subtraction. This includes combining two or more objects and removing and separating objects.

Words to use

- combines with
- joins
- less
- more

Activities that encourage adding

- **Add amounts of everyday items, toys, fruit, books.** Children may use their fingers to add.
- **As you are walking add the number of different items you see, for example flowers in a garden.**
- **On a calendar, ask your child to mark the days they went to school or did another activity. At the end of the week add the number of days for each activity.**
- **When you are shopping, talk about what you need to buy. Ask questions such as, "How many bananas for everyone in the family? If I get one more, how many will we have?"**
- **Play games that encourage adding using two dice, for example Snakes and Ladders.**

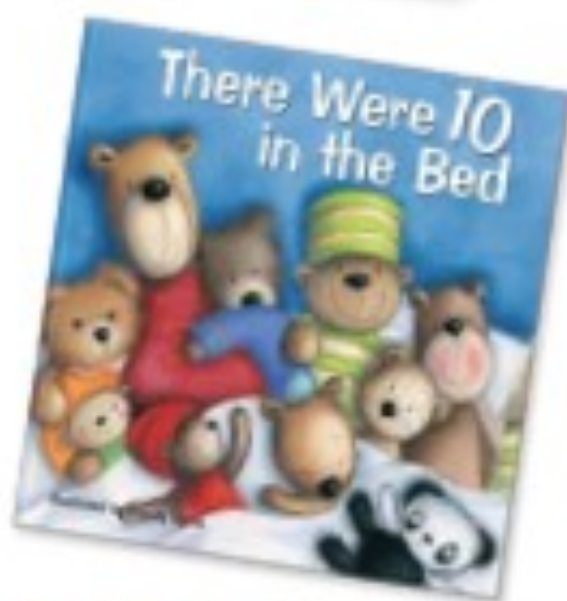
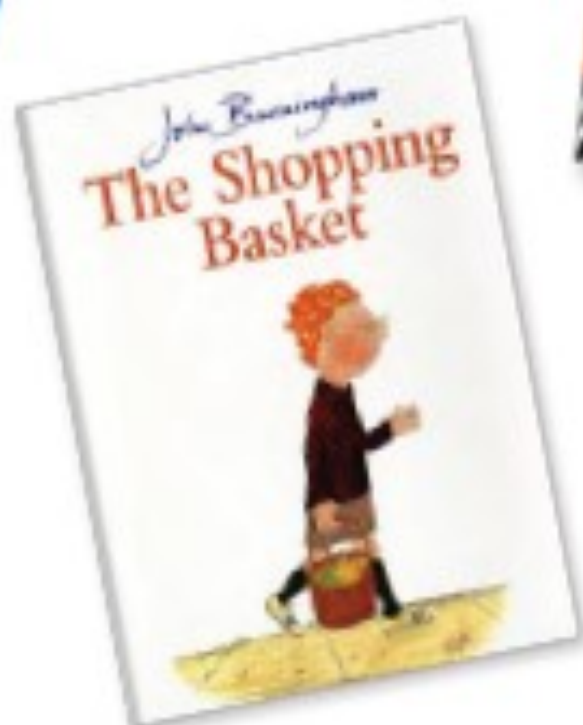




Activities to encourage subtracting

- **Subtract everyday items.** Count the items in their lunch box and then subtract as items are taken away.
- **When eating count how many items you have.** Ask questions such as, "How many grapes have you eaten? How many are left?"
- **Encourage your child to notice the difference when items are removed** such as taking eggs out of a carton or removing bananas from a bunch.
- **Sing songs** such as Five Little Ducks, where the number reduces as one is taken away.
- **Ask questions** such as, "We have five apples in the bowl. If I ate two apples how many apples are left?"

Books about adding and subtracting



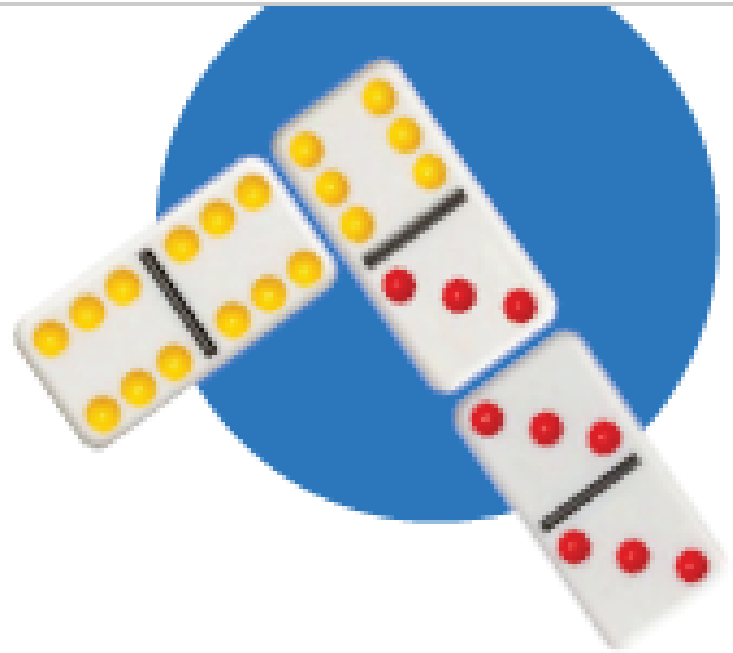


Identifying and creating patterns

A pattern is a repeated set. It can be made from shapes, sounds, numbers or objects.

Children can learn to recognise, identify, create, copy and continue patterns through daily activities.





Words to use

- repeat
- continue
- create
- identify
- describe
- pattern

Recognise and identify patterns

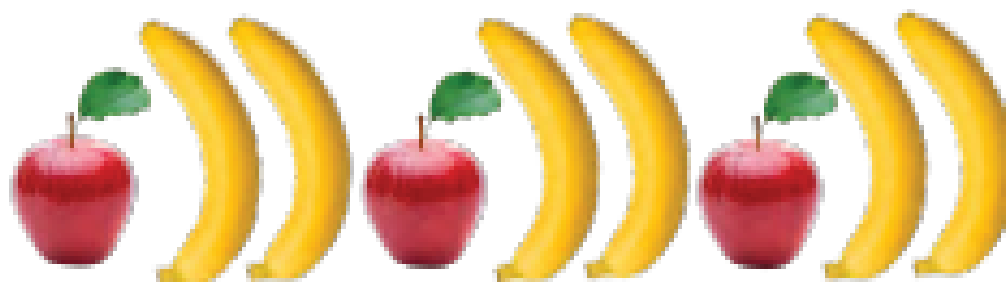
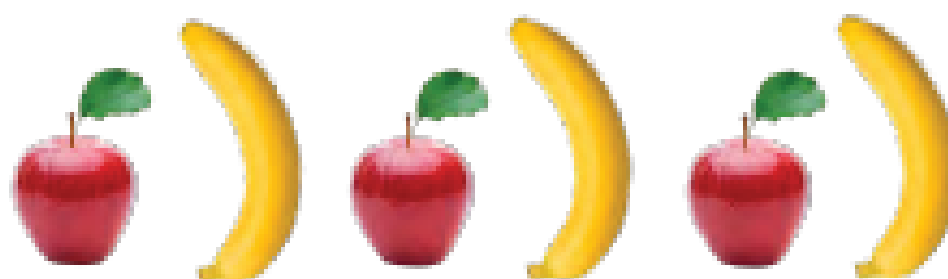
- **Identify patterns** such as on wrapping paper, bathroom tiles and driveways. Talk about the different patterns and what makes it a pattern.
- **Talk about patterns.** Ask questions such as, "Why is it a pattern?" "What makes this a pattern?" "How can you continue this pattern?"
- **Play games with cards, dominoes or dice** to help your child recognise patterns.

Copying patterns

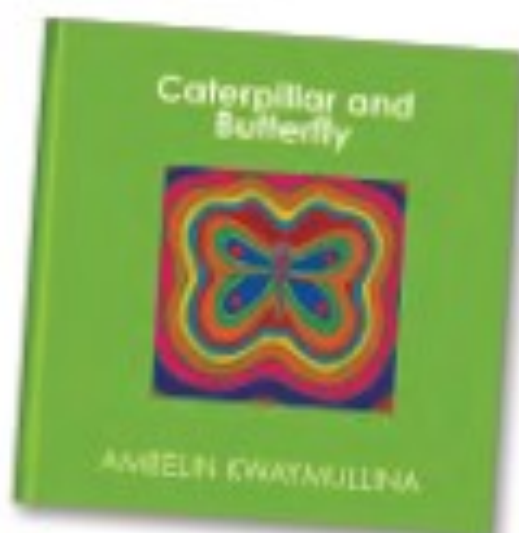
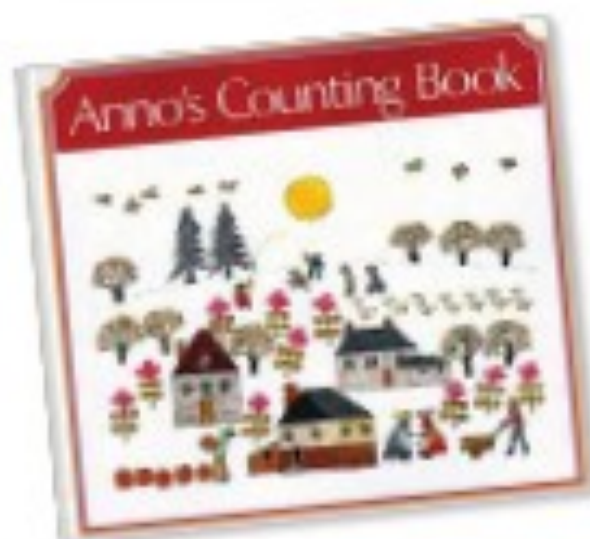
- Play clapping games where you clap a pattern and your child repeats the pattern. Ask your child to clap a pattern that you repeat.
- Set the table together for a meal using a pattern such as plate and spoon, plate and spoon, plate and spoon.

Creating patterns

- Create patterns with everyday items like toys and fruit.
- Start with simple patterns and then create harder patterns such as one apple, two bananas, one apple, two bananas, one apple, two bananas.



Books about patterns





Books to help your child develop literacy skills

Books for conversation and word-building

Dunbi the Owl – Daisy Utemorrah, editor Pamela Lofts. Scholastic Australia

Possum Magic – Mem Fox, illustrator Julie Vivas. Omnibus Books

Splish for the Billabong – Ros Moriarty, illustrator Balarinji. Allen and Unwin

The Day the Crayons Quit – Drew Daywalt, illustrator Oliver Jeffers. Harper Collins Children's Books

The Echidna and the Shade Tree – Mona Green, editor Pamela Lofts. Scholastic Australia

The Little Refugee – Anh and Suzanne Do, illustrator Bruce Whatley. Allen & Unwin Children

The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs – Jon Scieszka, illustrator Lane Smith. Penguin

The Very Cranky Bear – Nick Bland. Scholastic Australia

Books that have rhyme

Miss Spider's Tea Party – David Kirk. Scholastic Inc

No Way Yirrikipayi! – Alison Lester. Pan Macmillan Australia

Pig the Pug – Aaron Blabey. Scholastic Australia

Piranhas Don't Eat Bananas – Aaron Blabey. Scholastic Australia

Oi Cat! – Kes Gray, Jim Field. Hachette Australia

Sebastian Lives in a Hat – Thelma Catterwell, illustrator Kerry Argent. Omnibus Books

Walking Through the Jungle – Stella Blackstone. Barefoot Books

The Cat in the Hat – Dr Seuss. Random House

Books about letters

ABC Dreaming – Warren Brim. Magabala Books

Animalia – Graeme Base. Picture Puffins

Dr Seuss's ABC – Dr Seuss. Random House

I Spy, An Alphabet in Art – Lucy Micklethwait. Greenwillow Book

The books listed can be used across literacy and numeracy for a variety of purposes.

Visit our website and find more resources
to help your child have a great start at school:

education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers



Books to help your child develop numeracy skills

Books about numbers and counting

Counting on Community – Innosanto Nagara. Seven Stories Press, Penguin.

Counting with Tiny Cat – Viviane Schwarz. Walker Books

Five Little Ducks – Penny Ives. Child's Play International Ltd

One is a Snail, Ten is a Crab – April Pulley Sayre and Jeff Sayre, illustrator Randy Cecil. Scholastic Australia

One Woolly Wombat – Kerry Argent. Scholastic Australia

Ten Black Dots – Donald Crews. Scholastic Australia

Ten Little Dinosaurs – Mike Brownlow, illustrator Simon Rickerty. Orchard Books

Ten Little Jarjum – Tabulam Aboriginal Community members, editors Suzi Williams and Kate Merrifield. NSW Board of Studies

Ten Scared Fish – Ros Moriarty, illustrator Balarinji. Allen and Unwin

Books about adding and subtracting

Five Little Monkeys Play Hide-and-seek – Eileen Christelow.
Houghton Mifflin

Ten Little Beasties – Rebecca and Ed Emberley. Macmillan

Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes – Mem Fox, illustrator Helen Oxenbury. Puffin Books

Ten Little Ladybugs – Melanie Gerth, illustrator Laura Huliska-Beith.
Intervisual Books Inc

There Were 10 in the Bed – illustrator Wendy Straw. Sweet Cherry Publishing

The Shopping Basket – John Burningham. Random House

Uno's Garden – Graeme Base. Penguin Books, Puffin

Books about patterning

Anno's Counting Book – Mitsumasa Anno. Harper Collins

Caterpillar and Butterfly – Ambelin Kwaymullina. Fremantle Press

One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish – Dr Seuss. Random House

The Very Hungry Caterpillar – Eric Carle. Hamish Hamilton Press

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