

Count by Numbers

Your child is beginning to develop an understanding of math—even before she can say number words out loud. Once she can begin to say number words, she can begin to match the words to set size and then count the set (for example, “Look at the spoons. There are three! 1, 2, 3.”). You can help her do this by providing this kind of talk.

You can help her understand that a number word represents a specific amount. When waiting in line, say, “Let’s count the people in front of us. 1, 2, 3. There are three people in front of us. Then it’s our turn. How many people are behind us?” If your child answers incorrectly, instead of supplying the correct answer, say, “How did you get your answer? Let’s check if that’s right. Can you think of another way to solve that problem? Let’s count together.” Below, find other simple ways to talk math with your children when you’re in town.



OUT AND ABOUT

- **Count** the number of traffic lights you pass along the way and emphasize the total. “We’re passing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. That’s five traffic lights we just passed.” Next time, count the number of stop signs.
- Explain that **numbers** identify buildings (“See the house numbers we’re passing?”) and businesses (“We’re looking for our dentist’s office at 129 Autumn Road”). Ask, “What numbers do you see?”

WHEN RIDING THE BUS OR DRIVING IN YOUR CAR

- Say to your children, “Let’s **count** how many cars pass by while we wait for the light to

turn green.” Another time, count trucks or buses.

- Talk about vehicles with different **numbers** of wheels. **How many** wheels does a car have? How many wheels does a bicycle have? A tricycle? A scooter?

WHEN PARKING YOUR CAR

- When parking in a lot, **count** the cars between your car and the store: “1, 2, 3, 4. There are **four** cars between our car and the store.”
- If parking on the street, **count** the cars between your car and the crosswalk: “1, 2, 3. There are **three** cars between our car and the crosswalk.”