

## WHY ARE MATH SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Whether measuring ingredients for a recipe, or finding the right amount of change – **math is everywhere!** During Pre-K, children are beginning to develop the math skills needed for understanding and working with numbers, recognizing changes in groups when objects are added or taken away, creating patterns, and recognizing shapes. These skills are key to later learning and school success.

## WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

In Pre-K, children are working on...

- Counting verbally up to 20 and backward from 5
- Counting items and knowing the last number says how many there are altogether
- Comparing two groups of objects using words like “more” and “fewer”
- Use ordinal numbers (first through fifth) when describing the position of objects in a sequence
- Recognizing common shapes (squares, circles, triangles, rectangles) and describing how they are similar and different
- Identifying and exploring simple patterns

## How can I promote development of my child’s math skills?

You can help your child learn these math skills by providing opportunities to apply them in real life situations. Below are a few fun ways that you can do this!

**Read Counting Stories:** Read books with your child that include opportunities to count and compare. While you read, show your child how to point and count, and encourage them to count along. When there are groups of similar items or pictures, ask your child, “Which is more/fewer?” Some books that provide opportunities for counting and comparing are: *Ten Apples Up On Top*, by Dr. Seuss; *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*, by Eric Litwin; *Ten, Nine, Eight*, by Molly Bang; *How Do Dinosaurs Count To Ten?*, by Jane Yolen; and *Feast for 10*, by Cathryn Falwell.

**Use Fingers to See, Show, and Solve:** You and your child always have a counting tool available – your fingers! Hold up some fingers on one hand, and ask your child to count them by pointing to each one. Reinforce that each finger should be counted once. Then, ask your child to hold up the same number of fingers as you. Repeat this with other numbers. If this is easy for them, see if they can show you a different combination of fingers to make that number. For example, instead of showing 4 fingers on one hand, they might show you 2 and 2. (Adapted from [NAEYC](#))<sup>1</sup>

**Point Out Shapes:** At different times in the day, identify different shapes you see and ask your child to look for similar shapes. For example, say, “Your slice of cheese looks like a rectangle. Do you see anything else in the kitchen or on your plate that looks like a rectangle?”

**Make Patterns:** At the park or in your neighborhood, ask your child to collect small items, such as sticks, rocks, wood chips, leaves, or flowers. Work with them to create different patterns using two types of items (e.g., stick, stick, rock, stick, stick, rock).

**Build a Tower:** Use blocks, Legos, cans or other materials to build different sized towers. Ask your child which tower has more materials and which has fewer. Ask them how many more or less they would need for the towers to be equal.

<sup>1</sup>Grandau, L. (n.d.). Helping your child see and show mathematical ideas. Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/help-child-see-math>

## WHY ARE SELF-REGULATION SKILLS IMPORTANT?

**SELF-REGULATION** is the skill to manage one's own attention, emotions, and behaviors when faced with a challenge. This includes skills such as: following directions; waiting patiently; being in control of one's own body; remembering rules; persisting on tasks; and working through emotions. These skills set the foundation for learning. They are the tools that your child uses to deal with challenges that come up at school and home.

## WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

In pre-K, children are developing and learning how to...

- Remember classroom rules and routines, and contribute to class rules
- Wait patiently and direct attention for longer periods of time (up to five uninterrupted minutes)
- Persist at a task or activity even when it becomes difficult
- Complete an activity or task independently, trying more than one strategy before getting help
- Identify, express, and work through emotions
- Choose how to react to challenges, emotions, and reactions
- Transition smoothly from one activity to the next

### How can I promote development of my child's self-regulation skills?

You can help your child build their self-regulation skills by using strategies in their daily activities. You can also talk to your child's teacher about how your child is doing at school. How does this compare with their behavior at home? How does it differ? How do you and your child's teacher support self-regulation skills? If you and your child's teacher use some of the same strategies, it can give your child an extra boost in developing their self-regulation skills. Think about using some of these:

**Appreciate Your Child's Efforts:** When your child is working hard or doing something that makes you proud, let them know! You can do this by smiling, giving them a high five, or saying out loud what they are doing. Here are two tips to make the most of this strategy:

- **Be specific**—Describe in detail what you appreciate.
  - **Good:** "Great job!"
  - **Better:** "Great job - you worked hard picking up the toys!"
- **Focus on effort and persistence**—To increase your child's motivation and persistence, pay attention to *effort* and *improvement*.
  - **Good:** "You did that puzzle perfectly!" or "You finished that puzzle easily!"
  - **Better:** "I like how hard you worked on putting that puzzle together!"

**Make Activities Predictable:** Children often need support when moving between activities. As much as possible, create and stick to routines to help them learn and meet your expectations. Use different cues, like sounds, songs, or pictures, to remind them of what's coming next. Include your child in the cue, too! (For more ideas, see this [resource from NCPMI](#).)

- "We have 5 minutes left to play! Can you help me set the timer for 5 minutes?"

**Play Games:** Play games that help your preschooler practice controlling their own behavior. Familiar games, such as Red Light-Green Light, Mother May I, Simon-Says, Head Shoulders Knees and Toes, and Freeze Tag all support self-regulation. What other games could you play with your child to practice controlling their movement or volume?

## WHY ARE SOCIAL SKILLS IMPORTANT?

**SOCIAL SKILLS** refer to your child's developing capacity to work together with others and form positive relationships. These skills include making and keeping friends and working through conflicts. Social skills are important for relationships with other children, as well as adults. Children use their social skills at home with their family, at the park with people they meet, and at school with their teachers and classmates.

## WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

In pre-K, children are developing and learning how to...

- Start conversations, interactions, friendships, and play experiences with peers
- Tell others about their needs and feelings verbally
- Recognize how others are feeling
- Take turns and share materials and toys
- Work to solve disagreements with other children and adults
- Work through emotions during disagreements
- Participate in group activities

### How can I promote development of my child's social skills?

You can help your child build their social skills every day. Talk with them about feelings and friendships and help them figure out what to do when things don't go their way. Learn more about your child's social skills by talking with their teacher! Children often show different skills in different settings. Compare effective strategies and work together to coordinate across school and home. Think about using some of these:

**Identify Emotions:** When you notice your child starting to feel a certain way (happy, sad, angry, excited, nervous, frustrated), name their feeling. Point out these emotions in others, too. You can also use a [feeling chart](#) or other pictures to help them learn to recognize these emotions. Talking openly about emotions helps children learn to identify and manage them independently.


- *"Look at your friend's face. They look sad. Why do you think they feel sad? Is there something we could do to help them?"*

**Help Your Child Manage Emotions:** When your child is displaying a strong emotion (crying, yelling), first show your understanding by identifying the emotion, and then help them use a calm-down technique.

- *"You are feeling very overwhelmed...let's take three deep breaths together. In-and-out, in-and-out, in-and-out. How are you feeling now? OK, now that you are calmer let's think about what to do about this."*

**Teach and Support Problem-Solving:** Problems are inevitable, so prepare your child by teaching them specific strategies for solving them. It's helpful to use visuals and examples to represent these strategies, such as [these cards from CSEFEL](#). Then, when problems or disagreements come up, encourage your child to identify the problem and use one of the strategies. Remind them of their choices, but try to let your child lead the problem-solving process.

**Talk about Friendship Skills:** Outside of the classroom, your child may not interact with many other kids. Talk with them about friendly words and actions. Make note of it when you see those actions in the real world (e.g., at the park or the grocery store) or stories (such as *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*, by Carol McCloud or *Should I Share My Ice Cream?*, by Mo Willems). When you see your child displaying positive social skills, be sure to let them know that they are doing a good job!

 Information regarding PALS literacy assessments and activities to support literacy development are on the “FOR FAMILIES” tab of the PALS website (<http://pals.virginia.edu/>).

