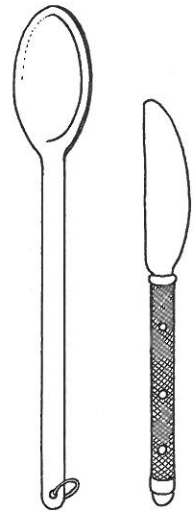


Shorter, Longer

Targeted skill

Young children are expected to learn the length of two objects and identify the one that is shorter and the one that is longer.



Materials

- ◆ almost anything in the house, but start with familiar objects whose lengths can be easily compared, such as spoon to knife, pencil to pen, or toothpick to spatula

What to do

This activity consists of comparing two objects and using the correct mathematical terms—*shorter* or *longer*. You can do this activity at the dinner table using flatware or have your child sort through the family's junk drawer to find objects: paper clips, pencils, pens, envelopes, index cards, and so on.

Simply line up two objects and model for your child. You might say, "This one is shorter and this one is longer," as you point to each object in turn. Then ask your child to choose two objects and make the same judgment. Be sure your child uses the correct mathematical terms of *shorter* and *longer*.

What your child is practicing

These activities are the beginning steps of understanding measurement. Your child must grasp this concept before he or she begins to use a ruler to determine a standard measure, such as inches or feet.

Extending the activity

- ✦ When your child can consistently identify the shorter and longer object (and use the correct term for each), add another object, so that your child has to order the three items by length. Arrange the objects so that they all have the same starting point. For example, place the ends of each object along the edge of the table. Sometimes young children have difficulty aligning the ends of objects. Your child needs many experiences before he or she realizes that this is an important part of measurement.
- ✦ When your child can order four or five objects, begin introducing other terms used to compare objects: *taller* and *shorter*, *narrower* and *wider*.