

Spoon Measurement

Targeted skill

Young children are expected to compare and order two or three concrete objects according to volume, determining which one holds more or less. They are also measuring according to volume rather than the more common measurement of length.

Materials

- ◆ 3 or 4 small, clear containers (clear plastic cups or containers that hold leftover food work well, as long as they're all the same size)
- ◆ spoons (large measuring spoons or scoops work well)
- ◆ container of water
- ◆ towels

What to do

This activity can be done outside, on the kitchen floor, or on the countertop—anywhere that spills can be easily cleaned up. Placing a towel under the work surface helps collect drips and spills. Keeping another towel nearby is a good idea also.

Place the three containers on the surface. Ask your child to place a given number of spoonfuls of water into the first container. Ask him or her to do the same for the other containers, varying the amount of water in each one.

Then ask your child to place the containers in order from least amount of water to greatest. Discuss his or her thinking. Talk about looking at the level of water in the container. Help your child realize the relationship between the number of spoonfuls of water put in the container with the volume of the water.

Repeat the activity with a larger spoon, then with a smaller spoon. Continue to use the mathematical terms of *more*, *less*, *greater than*, and *less than*.

Spoon Measurement (continued)

Extending the activity

- ✦ Vary the size of the containers. For example, gather three large containers and three small containers. Compare how the water level differs, depending on the size of the container.
- ✦ Use bath time as an opportunity for this activity, placing the containers on the side of the tub.
- ✦ If your child has difficulty seeing the water level, use a few drops of food coloring to tint the water.
- ✦ Encourage your child to use the markings on a measuring cup to describe his or her activities. If the cup has too many marks and is confusing, use a permanent marker to mark $\frac{1}{4}$ -, $\frac{1}{2}$ -, and $\frac{3}{4}$ -full positions on a plain container.

What your child is practicing

Young children do not get much practice with measuring liquids or determining volume. Using mathematical terms, like *more* or *less*, while doing these activities helps your child's understanding.