

What Comes in Twos and Threes?

Targeted skill

Young children are expected to improve their number sense as they learn that numbers have a relationship to groups of objects, for example, that objects can come in pairs.

Materials

- ◆ collection of things that come in twos (shoes, socks, eyes, hands, ears, arms, legs, sleeves in a jacket, legs in pants, bicycle tires)
- ◆ collection of things that come in threes (tricycle tires, sides of a triangle, three little pigs, three bears)

What to do

To begin playing, show your child just one “thing” that comes in twos, and then challenge him or her to go through the house looking for other things that come in twos. For example, you might discuss how one sock matched with another sock makes a pair, or two socks. Challenge him or her to notice other twos (or pairs of objects).

On another day, show your child just one “thing” that comes in threes, and then challenge him or her to go through the house looking for other things that come in threes. It helps in early games of What Comes in Twos and Threes? to put sets of twos and threes in plain sight around the house. For example, you might place a knife, fork, and spoon in clear view on the kitchen cabinet or move the tricycle to a prominent place in the garage.

It is not enough for young children to see the numeral 2 and be able to recognize it. Children need to see many sets of twos, so that over time, they begin to develop number sense about the numeral 2. They also need to understand the relationship among numbers—that three is more than two, that two is more than one.

Extending the activity

While it will be more difficult to locate things that come in larger numbers, challenge the whole family to look for such things. For example, car tires, dog legs, and sides of squares come in fours; fingers, toes, and sides of a pentagon come in fives.

What your child is practicing

Looking for mathematical concepts in his or her environment helps your child truly understand that numbers are more than just a “school thing.”