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Nursery maths activities

Maths in the Early Years is a crucial stepping stone for children to develop, which is why it's so important that the little ones can explore and experience it in an enjoyable way. We've carefully chosen some fun activities and games to promote early maths learning of numbers through play.Want to see how it's done? Click here to watch the video of our five favourite activities Early Years activities to develop math skills1. Combine maths skills with fine-motor skills.Number Hunt in Jelly by Hazeldene Family CentreThis fun maths activity:First, spread out some plastic numbers in jelly layers. When it's all set, give out some tongs to children and show them how to pick up the numbers from the wiggly substance (and practice their fine motor skills along the way!)f. This sensory play is a great way of sneaking in number recognition into some sensory play.What you need:JellyBowlsPlastic NumbersTongs2. How do you make maths activities fun? Add Lego!DIY Lego Pattern Cards by A Crafty LivingThis fun maths game:Lego. Useful in so many different ways, including making mathematics exciting. Prepare some cards with colourful blocks on them and let children discover colour patterns and reproduce them with LEGO bricks. Consider leaving the colouring part to your little learners so they can form their own patterns and include some EAD in the mix too. It's a win-win!What you need:Paper CardsColoured PencilsLEGO Blocks3. Challenge the children's maths skills to solve a missing number mystery!Missing Number Math Activity by Planning PlaytimeThis Early Years maths game:Write number sequences on craft sticks and remember to leave some blanks in between. Next, you write the missing numbers on some clothes pins and give them out to the players. Now the children use their fine-motor skills and clip the pins on sticks and complete the sequence. The best thing about this fun and inexpensive maths game is that you only create the props once and they're ready to be used as many times as you like.What you need:Craft Sticks (colour or plain)SharpiesClothes Pins4. A simple game of swat the number.Smack the Number Counting Game by Fun Learning for KidsThis fun maths activity:Prepare some sticky notes with various numbers and place them in front of the children armed with fly swatters. Roll the dice to get your target number. The goal of this simple yet fun game is for the little ones to identify the number on the dice and match it with the ones written on sticky notes by smacking the correct answer with a fly swatter!What you need:One or two diceFly swatterSticky notes5. Playing with pom-poms to promote problem-solving skillsStraw and Pom Poms Counting Game by Nurture StoreThis fun maths game:Label small containers with some numbers that you'd like your learners to practice and prepare some straws and pom poms. For this fun maths activity, the kids simply put the straw on a pom-pom and suck in, to try and pick it up. Then they drop it over the containers until they've got the right number in each one.What you need:Pom-pomsStrawsShallow containersLabelled stickers (or any paper, glue and marker)6. A fun maths game to drive you dotty!Number Dots and Easy Touch And Count Activity by Busy ToddlerThis Early Years maths game:Tape some paper to the wall and write several numbers, each decorated with dots, to match the quantity the number represents e.g. 4 dots on the number 4. Now, the players can touch each dot with a marker and see the number and the quantity altogether! You can also put the paper on the floor but holding a marker up and out makes this not only a fun game for early years maths but also a good way to strengthen those little arm muscles.What you need:7. A magnetic, mathematical, magical fishing gameMagnetic fishing number game by Messy Little MonsterThis Early Years maths activity:First, you or the children need to cut your paper into fish shapes and add a paperclip. Next, write the numbers on the fish using a pen. For the fishing rod, tie some string (with a magnet on the end) to your stick! Now the whole class can 'fish' for numbers!What you need:Card/Paper (or old pieces of artwork) to cut into fish shapesPaper clipsMarkerMagnets, preferably some too large to be swallowed.StringStick or long piece of woodN.B. Always supervise children very carefully with magnets.8. Fun maths activities are eggs-actly what we're looking for!Egg Cracking Counting Activity by Modern PreschoolThis fun maths game:Looking to 'hatch' a plan for some fun maths games? Create 'eggs' by cutting out oval shapes from cardboard and writing different numbers on them. Students identify the numbers and 'crack the eggs' by punching the corresponding number of holes in them - you could always make one first, as an example. This exercise can also help develop muscles in those minute hands.What you need:CardboardHole punchMarkersScissors9. More fun in maths? Make it musical!Top 10 Counting Songs by Super Simple Songs - Kids SongsThis fun maths activity:According to the BBC "When children are singing they are taking in information and training the brain but they don't think they are, they think they are just having fun. Singing is an aerobic activity that boosts oxygenation in the bloodstream, increasing mental alertness". We agree! Check out these 10 lovely songs to give it a go.What you need:A way to play musicFour voices!10. Matching with maths - a classic game with a mathematical twist.Valentine Math Activity - Broken Heart Numbers by Fun a DayThis Early Years maths game:Sometimes the most fun games are the classics. A simple matching game for one player, two players, or the whole classroom! Simply cut out some hearts and cut each in half using different zigzags, squiggles and other connecting shapes. Then write a number on one side and draw a corresponding number of hearts on the other. Well done, you've just created puzzles! Challenge the children to see who can find the matching hearts card to their number cards.What you need:Paper or cardMarkersScissorsResearch indicates that learning math early contributes to better math achievements later in school and even better achievement in literacy. The same study points out that the most predictive thing for a future success in school is entering school with math skills.This is why we've compiled a list of 15 amazing math activities for preschoolers that will help you introduce preschoolers to math concepts in a fun and engaging way. Read on to find out more.15 Math Activities for Preschoolers1. Sorting ColorsSorting and classifying objects in different categories is highly beneficial for practicing preschool math as it encourages the child to think analytically and it will build the foundation for later math skills, such as algebraic operations.The best of all? Preschoolers are naturally drawn to sorting stuff, and you might often notice them engaging in arranging their toys in categories. So, it shouldn't be too hard to get them engaged in additional sorting activities!One sorting activity that you can do with a preschooler is sorting colors. To do this, use three (or more) types of colored tape and create different shapes on the floor with each tape type. For example, you could create a big red triangle, a green rectangle, and a yellow square.Then, get plenty of small pom-poms with the same colors (in this case, red, green, and yellow) and ask the child to sort them inside the floor shapes according to the color. And if you happen to be tight on money, here's how to create your own pom-poms out of yarn.2. Sorting by TypeNext on our math activities for preschoolers list, we have sorting by type. You'll need some duct tape for this activity as well, as you'll have to create a large frame on the inside and the outside where the child is supposed to sort the appropriate objects. However, in contrast to the previous sorting activity, they don't sort the objects by color, but by type. For instance, bring plenty of animal counters, including farm animals like cattle, pigs, goats, horses, and wild animals such as elephants, lions, hyenas, rhinos, etc. Place the animals in a pile on the floor and ask the child to separate the farm animals inside the frame and leaving the wild ones outside of it.Another variation of the game that may be easier, in case you don't have access to animal counters, is to use fruits and vegetables and have the child classify fruits on the inside and vegetables on the outside of the frame (or vice versa).3. Counting BearsPlastic counting bears are a colorful educational manipulative for preschool children who are learning to count. But they're also ideal for exploring patterns. To create a pattern recognition activity with counting bears, you'll need a pack of counting bears and a large sheet with circles. This is one of those math activities for preschoolers that kids find fun, which is why we had to include it on our list.As the counting bears come in five different colors, color the circles using only these five colors in order to create an ABC color pattern. For instance, if you have 7 rows, one circle will be green, the next one yellow, and the third one blue. Then you'd repeat the pattern with the next three: green, yellow, blue, leaving the seventh circle empty.Ask the child to arrange the counting bears on top of each corresponding circle, so as to match the color. That is, a green bear should be placed on the green circle, a yellow bear on the yellow one, and a blue one on the blue one. Then, ask the child to observe the pattern and identify what color to use to color the seventh circle and what type of bear should go on it.4. Graphing With Coin-FlippingGraphing activities are very useful in helping the child familiarize themselves with the ways of showcasing data. From drawing bar graphs to pie chart manipulatives, you can find plenty of creative ways to practice some graphing. This can be something as simple as creating a bar graph by flipping a coin. Take a sheet of paper and draw a head and a tail. Both the head and the tail are placed under a column of squares.Now it's time for some coin-flipping! Ask the child to flip the coin and every time the result is head, they color a square from the head column. Limit the number of times they flip the coin (ex. 20) so that when you reach 20 times, the child can compare and contrast which bar is higher.5. Graphing With BowlingThis can be either a group activity or an activity that you do with your child. The goal is to create a bar graph while bowling. Thus, to do this activity, you'll need a bowling ball and pins. In lack of a bowling ball and pins, you can also do this activity with plastic cups and a tennis ball.Then, take a large sheet of paper and add a line at the bottom with the following numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. These numbers will represent the number of pins the children managed to knock down. Write the following question on the paper: "How many pins did we knock down?"You'll also need sticky notes that will be placed on the paper sheet in a column over the corresponding number each time a child knocks pins down. For example, if one player knocks down 5 pins, they put one sticky note in the column over number 5. If the next student knocks down 5 pins again, they add a sticky note to number 5 again.After a few rounds, children will end up with a bar graph that has columns out of sticky notes and will be able to analyze the visual representation of their bowling as a group, and compare which bar is the highest and which is the lowest.6. Learning Shapes With GeoboardsMany parents or preschool teachers use geoboards to explore the different geometric shapes. If you can't afford a commercial geoboard, it's actually pretty easy to create one. Just grab a large corkboard, a few push pins, and a few rubber bands.It only takes a few minutes to arrange the push pins on the geoboard, just make sure they're arranged in parallel rows and columns to facilitate the activity. Create a few task cards in advance, with a task line and an image of a certain shape that the child is supposed to create on the geoboard.For instance, if the child gets a task card with a rectangle on it, and the task says: "I can create a rectangle", then the child uses the rubber band to create a rectangle.As children manipulate the rubber bands and re-create the images from the task cards, they are working on their fine motor skills, while memorizing what a specific geometric shape looks like.7. Matching ShapesNext on our math activities for preschoolers list is the matching shapes activity, which is perfect for a larger group of kids. So if you're a kindergarten teacher looking for a way to practice shapes with the children, make sure to give this activity a try. It will get kids moving and burn some of that extra energy!You'll need to prepare a variety of shapes. You can simply use color paper to draw them on and then cut them out. The exact number will depend on how big the group of children is. Make sure you have every shape at least twice (two rectangles, two circles, etc.) and that one shape is big and the other small.Then hand out the shapes to the children, each child should get one shape. Tell them the aim of the activity is to find a match for their shape (ex: if one child has a big triangle, they should find the other kid that is holding a small triangle).By matching shapes of different sizes, children will learn that shapes are the same regardless of their size. That is, a triangle is a triangle and a rectangle is a rectangle, whether small or big.8. Geometry JumpGeometry jump gets your kids jumping around to learn the different geometry shapes! All you need to do is draw geometric shapes in different colors on the driveway, such as a circle, triangle, square, etc. For children with more advanced math skills, throw in some octagons, hexagons, trapezoids, etc.Now ask the child to stand right next to the shapes and tell them you're going to play a game that will involve jumping from one shape to another. As you shout out a shape (ex: circle), the child tries to quickly jump on the circle shape.When you notice that the child is starting to master the shapes, you can increase the pace at which you shout out the shapes. Just make sure that the shapes that you're shouting out are within reach of the child so they don't get hurt.If you want to make the game more challenging and practice quick reasoning skills, you can try having identical shapes, but with different colors. For instance, your 'game board' could have 1 white circle, 1 red circle, 1 blue rectangle, 1 green rectangle, 1 yellow trapezoid, 1 blue trapezoid, etc.Then, instead of shouting out just the shape, you shout out both the shape and the color and the child has to quickly think where to jump to. Again, increase the pace as the child becomes more comfortable.9. Counting Pine ConesThis is a simple outdoor activity that you can use to help the child practice numbers and counting. You'll need pine cones and some colorful chalk and then you're all set to go!Draw numbers on the driveway with colorful chalk, you can use a different color for every number to make it more visually stimulating. Start with 1-10 numbers and then add additional numbers as the child's counting skills progress.Bring a pile of pine cones and ask the child to put the corresponding number of cones under each numeral written on the driveway. That is, the child should put 3 cones under number 3, 5 cones under number 5, 7 cones under number 7, and so on.In lack of pine cones, you can easily adjust the activity to any material you've got in your neighborhood, including leaves or small stones.10. Apples on a TreeThis activity involves practicing counting while putting apples on a tree. You'll need a printed apple tree drawing (or simply draw an apple tree on a sheet of paper yourself). Just make sure the apple tree doesn't have any apples on it as the aim of the activity is for the child to place a given number of apples on it.You'll also need 2 dice and some small pom-poms. Include pom-poms in two different colors, for instance, yellow and red, as these will represent the apples.Ask the child to roll the two dice. The dice closer to them will signal the number of red apples and the dice that is rolled farther away will signal the number of yellow apples on the tree.Let's say the child got a 5 and a 3 after rolling the two dice, with the 5 being closer to them. They should then put 2 red apples and 3 yellow apples on the tree. Repeat until the child manages to count the pom-poms quickly.11. Broken Heart NumbersThis is a matching activity that focuses on number recognition and counting. You'll need some red construction paper, a marker and some scissors. Draw hearts on the construction paper and cut all hearts in half in a zig-zag way.On one half on the heart, write a number and on the other half of the heart, draw small hearts that will correspond to the number written on the first half. For instance, if you wrote the number 4 in the first half, you'll need to draw four hearts in the second half.Now mix up the heart halves in a pile on the floor and start playing! To avoid making it too complicated, you can simply put all the numeral halves on one side and all the small heart halves on the other.Explain to the child that they'll need to match the heart halves with the appropriate numbers, so as to mend all of the broken hearts!12. Animal MatchingThis animal matching activity is a great group activity that any preschool teacher can easily use, but if you're a parent wanting to practice some preschool math with your child, you can easily adapt it to an individual activity, as well.You'll need to either get some printouts with animals or draw a given number of animals on different cards yourself. In addition to the animal cards, you'll need to create number cards that have a certain number written on them.Give a card to each child, either an animal card or a number card. They're supposed to go around the room and try to find their match. For instance, if a child got a number card on which the number 7 is written, they're supposed to find a child that holds an animal card with seven animals (these could be seven lions, seven monkeys, or any other animal).Just make sure to explain to children that they're not supposed to shout out their number or animal quantity. They should simply go from one child to the other and ask the other child to flip their card. The first pair that manages to find that match wins the game!13. Ice Cream MathAll children love ice cream, so they'll have a blast playing one of their favorite math activities for preschoolers! You'll need an ice cream box, ice cream cones, and some ice cream tongs. And of course, you'll have to make some ice cream and put it in the box. Alternatively, you can simply purchase a box of ice cream.Explain to the child that this activity involves role-playing - they're the ice cream vendor and you're the customer. As a customer, you approach them and ask them for ice cream with a certain number of ice cream balls. They take your order and count the number of balls they put in the cone.Afterward, you put the balls back into the ice cream box and repeat the activity with a different number. Once the child manages to get all numbers right, you treat yourselves with some delicious ice cream!If you don't want to use real ice cream, a simpler variation of this activity is to create an ice cream cone out of paper and use some toon-toms as ice cream balls. Use small tweezers to place the balls into the cone. Everything else stays the same, you're the customer placing orders at the ice cream shop and the child is happy to serve you ice cream orders!14. Symmetry With LadybugsThis is a creative way to learn symmetry and reinforce counting skills in children. To do this activity, you'll need a drawing of a huge ladybug (without any black spots on its wings), a pencil and rubber, and some black playdough. Write the following sentence on top of the ladybug: "I have x black spots on my wings". The x stands for the number of spots the ladybug has on its wings, and you'll modify it each time according to the number you wish to practice.For instance, if you write "I have 8 black spots on my wings", the child is supposed to create 8 spots out of the playdough and place them on the ladybug's wings. In the next round, you'll erase the number 8 and write 10 or any other number you wish to practice.Just make sure you are writing numbers that are even, as the aim of the activity is to practice both symmetry and counting skills, so the child will need to place the same number of spots on both the left and right wing of the ladybug.15. Lego MeasurementThe final activity on our math activities for preschoolers list involves Legos. Since standard units of measurement, such as inches/centimeters, pounds/kilos, quarts/liters, etc. might be too complicated for preschool children, you can rely on non-standard units of measurements that use common things that children already know. One example of this is Legos.Grab a pile of Legos and place them on the floor. Just make sure that the size of the Legos you gather is more or less the same. Alternatively, you can use any other type of toy building bricks, as long as they fit together.In the meantime, the child should choose a few of their toys and place them on the floor next to the Legos. Explain to the child that you'll try to do some measurements and size prediction together, with the help of the Legos.Then ask the child to measure one of the toys they chose by placing legos alongside the toy. For example, if the child brought their favorite teddy bear, have them measure how tall this teddy bear is by stacking Legos next to it.Now the child should have an idea of how many legos it takes for a given object, ask them to predict how many Legos should be fitted together for the rest of the toys. Use a chart with prediction and result to compare the answers.ConclusionThis article enumerated 15 amazing math activities for preschoolers that will sharpen your child's math skills and get them ready to start school!Are you looking for more math activities for preschoolers? Make sure to check out our site at MathTeacherCoach, or have a look at our blog, where you'll find plenty of resources for kids of all ages. Sign up to become a member and never worry again about running out of amazing math ideas! Young kids learn by doing, especially preschoolers! They are active, hands-on, and excited about learning. Here's a collection of preschool math games and activities across many early math areas that tap into that action-oriented enthusiasm and their need to get hands-on. There is a lot of emphasis on the basics of early math learning in these preschool math games, especially patterns, numbers, colors, shapes, and counting. Everything else with math builds on these. So, have fun doing and learning together with these math games for preschool students. Sarah Cason for We Are Teachers Students will use this engaging colorful activity that helps them practice basic counting and one-to-one correspondence. Provide pipe cleaners and pony beads (these have wide holes). Have students use 10 pipe cleaners and put one bead on the first, two beads on the second, and continuing to 10 beads on the 10th pipe cleaner. Count these out loud together as kids touch the beads on their Pipe Cleaner Counters. Provide a plastic tub of sand with a pre-determined number of playing cards "buried" in the sand. Also have a sheet of paper with numbers matching the cards. A student will dig for and find a card, then place it next to the matching number on the sheet. Of course students can use their hands to dig, but plastic shovels, plastic spoons, or tongs might add to the fun. So simple but so fun! Who doesn't love to play with balloons? Students will need a balloon and a die. Students roll the die and then bounce their balloon that number of times without letting it touch the ground. Sarah Cason for We Are Teachers Getting hands-on with preschool math games and counting with cubes is a great way to get a "feel" for math. Give students a pair of dice and blocks, LEGO bricks, or Unifix Cubes. Students roll one die and build a tower with that number of blocks or cubes. They then roll the second die and add that number to the tower. Now count how many cubes or bricks in the tower. Compare towers. Ask questions that have students thinking and counting like, Which is tallest? How many cubes is it? Which is shortest? How many cubes in that one? Take towers apart and begin again. Kids love bugs, and with this activity, they get to make one. Cut out pieces of paper that create parts of two simple, identical bugs: 1 head, 2 antennae, 2 eyes, a body, 6 legs, a tail. Put all the pieces in the center. Give students a die. Students will play in pairs, rolling the die and taking that number of bug body parts and assembling them together. Keep rolling until the pair builds a complete bug. This will take a bit of simple prep, but it will serve as a set of shapes that will last! Provide students with markers, wood craft sticks, and glue. Give directions to create shapes, like, "color three sticks green and put them together to make a triangle, color four sticks red for a square, color five sticks blue for a pentagon," and so on. Students can follow a prepared mat with the colored shapes or just make the shapes with sticks without the guide mat. Try making one a day at the beginning, and then students can work independently. Sarah Cason for We Are Teachers Most kids love to run around and hit things. You don't get much chance to do that as a preschooler, but in this game you do! Write numbers 1 through 10 on the board or on cards that you place around the classroom. Give a student a fly swatter. Call out a number and the student must run to the correct number and swat that number. Everyone then says the number aloud. Pass the fly swatter on to the next person and continue until everyone gets a turn. This activity taps into imaginative play ... and bears! Use six dark-colored plastic bowls as bear caves. Cut out a "cave opening" on the side of the bowls, turn the bowl/caves upside down, and put a number sticker from 1 to 6 on each cave. Provide counting bears and a die. Students will roll the die, count that many bears, and put them in the corresponding numbered cave. If that cave is already full, roll again. Measuring with cubes is a good beginning for standardized measuring. Have students bring in a stuffed animal bear from home. In groups, have the students put the bears in order of height from shortest to tallest. Measure each bear using connecting blocks. Ask questions like: How tall was the shortest bear? The tallest? How many bears were the same height? Try this with different stuffed animals another day. Provide some matchbox toy cars or similar. Tape a number on the roof of each vehicle. Put out a large piece of cardboard where you have drawn and numbered "parking spaces." Kids can have some driving fun as they "park" their numbered small vehicles in their corresponding numbered parking spaces. Sarah Cason for We Are Teachers Matching countable sets with a number is a good early math skill. Here's one way to do it. Students will use dominoes to match the values of numbered cards laid out on the floor or table. There will be several different dominoes with different combinations that will match up with each number card. For example, a number card with 6 can be matched with dominoes that have 4/2, 3/3, or 5/1. Patterns are the foundation of a lot of mathematics, and kids begin to notice them early on. Make an arrangement/pattern of colored circles on a prepared guide sheet. Provide students with the same color cotton balls or pom-poms. Students will use their finger, or tongs or tweezers for even more fun, to mirror the arrangement or pattern set for them by placing them in an empty ice cube tray. Pair up students and give them an un-numbered 10-space grid. Also have them each pick a small plastic animal from a set you can easily find at the dollar store. Players roll a die and move their animal that many spaces on the grid. BUT to get to the 10th and last space, they must roll the exact number. This activity has kids sorting and then building. First, create the "monsters" by gathering four or five lunch-size paper bags. Use card stock in colors that will match the colors of the blocks, LEGO bricks, or cubes. Make "monster" faces with googly eyes, markers, pencils, and other craft materials. Attach the monster face onto the paper bags, then cut out a mouth of a size the blocks can fit through. Now the kids will feed the monsters blocks by matching the block color to the monster face color. Once all the blocks have been fed to the monsters, the students will empty the "monster bag," count the blocks, and build something of their choice with that color block. Sarah Cason for We Are Teachers Provide students with a set of cards with single-digit numbers on them and a set of building blocks. The students will lay out the cards in a row on the table and for each number make a tower using that corresponding number of blocks right next to the card. When introducing the activity, start with four or five cards, then after some experience, add more cards with even higher numbers. Gather several paper towel and toilet tissue tubes. Stand them upright and write a number on each one. Students will drop small objects—counting bears, blocks, etc.—into the tubes according to the number on the tube. When finished, have a partner help check by counting together. This activity focuses on comparisons using the math vocabulary words "more" and "less." On paper plates, stamp or draw colored circles using two different colors. The number of circles should be easy for your students to count. Every student gets a paper plate. Then start the music. Students begin to walk or hop around the room until the teacher stops the music. Then students find someone nearby to pair up with. They compare their paper plates, counting dots and comparing which one has more and which one has less. The teacher asks each pair to verbalize what they found out, and then the music and march starts again. Sarah Cason for We Are Teachers Learning to recognize numbers is a key early math objective. Here's one of the simple preschool math games to practice that idea. Get a small number of Uno game cards—start with eight and put in matching pairs. Turn the cards face down and let pairs of students take turns flipping over two cards per turn hoping for a match. You can either play so that when they get a match, their turn is over, or when they get a match, they go again. Draw the shapes you want your student to practice on separate sheets of card stock. You can also write the shape name. Spread these out on the floor. Have the students hunt in the room for items that are that shape, and put the items on or near that corresponding shape sheet. You can see patterns, you can make patterns, and you can also hear patterns. Using clapping, tapping, and snapping fingers, the teacher/leader sounds out a pattern and the kids follow along and join in. For example, you might do three claps, two taps on the floor, three claps, two taps on the floor. After everyone joins in successfully, stop and ask someone to describe the pattern in words. Extend the patterns when the students seem ready for more complex ones. Then let students take a turn leading. Discuss with students how a pattern always repeats. Red, blue is not a pattern until it repeats. On the whiteboard, draw a pattern using shapes. For example, you might draw square, square, square, circle, square, square, circle. Have students come up and draw the continuation of the pattern. Make the patterns more complex when students seem ready for more complex patterns. This can also be done with colors (of the same shape). For example, draw dots on the board: blue, green, red, blue, green, green, red, and have students come up and continue the pattern. In this activity, students physically record a listening pattern with blocks. Gather the class in a circle. Explain that you will clap and snap a pattern and that students will make it in front of them using blocks. A blue block is a clap. A red block is a snap. If you make a pattern that is clap, snap, clap, snap, students would put out blue, red, blue, red. Put a pile of blocks in the center. Clap and snap a pattern while the students build it. When done, ask students to explain why they built the pattern they did. Try a few more and then let students take turns leading. Sarah Cason for We Are Teachers This activity emphasizes counting but also lays the foundation for subtraction. Supplies needed are two same-size plastic cups (large blue or red are perfect), a single die, and the same number of small items (counting bears, building blocks, etc.) that will fit in each cup. Pairs of students take turns rolling the die and removing that many items from their cup. Whoever empties their cup first wins. Give each student two sheets of paper. Have them draw two pictures, one of someone standing and one of someone sitting. Urge students to keep the drawings simple. Gather all the sheets and put them in a pile face down. Have a student turn over the top three sheets, and the class will form that pattern. For example, if the pictures show "stand, stand, sit," students will form a line and the first two students will stand and the third will sit. Students 4 and 5 will stand and student 6 will sit. Continue the pattern with all the students. Provide each student with a large sheet of construction paper (the color doesn't matter) and a glue stick. Put a large number of shapes cut from different colors of construction paper in the center of the table. Ask students to create a pattern around the edge of their sheet of construction paper with two colors or two shapes to form a frame. In the middle of the frame, draw a picture. If you work small, you can make several of these with different frame patterns. Give each student a prepared card or strip of card stock with a pattern on it. The pattern could be of shapes (all the same color) or the pattern could be only colors (all the same shape). Give students a whiteboard or other erasable surface to copy the pattern and continue it. Draw a numeral several times on the board. Instruct very specifically exactly how the numeral is drawn. Students use their pointer finger to trace the number in the air, then trace it on their palm, and then on their desks, repeating the teacher's specific instructions out loud. Then give each student a paper plate with rice, salt, or sand to trace in. Continue to practice. Allow students to take turns "giving the instructions" to the class on how to write the numeral. Sarah Cason for We Are Teachers Show the class a pattern they've made using different-colored connecting blocks. Give the students blocks and ask them to reproduce that pattern and continue it. Once they've shown mastery of this, have students create their own pattern using eight blocks. Collect these and put them in a box. Students take turns pulling these out of the box, bringing them to their seats, and using more blocks to continue the pattern. Pair students up. They'll need two sets of cards, one with a numeral written on it and the other with a corresponding number of dots. They'll also need a variety of ways to write the numerals, like chalk and blackboard, markers and whiteboard, salt/sand/rice trays, or shaving cream on the desk. (Students should be given some free exploratory time with the shaving cream. Then the rules and behavior for shaving cream will have to be explained because it is very easy to get distracted by (and so motivating!) One student in the pair holds up either a numeral card or a dot card and the other student says the number and writes it the way the teacher has instructed. Students take turns going back and forth as number caller and "recorder." Give each student a box containing three different types of items like crayons, markers, pencils, sorting bears, Popsicle sticks, or erasers. Tell the students to make three groups, each group having the same type of item. The teacher or a partner checks, then puts the items back in the box and passes the box to the person on their right. Repeat this several times.