



The Value of Counting



Counting may seem like something children just do naturally, but accurate counting involves more than reciting number words. When children count objects carefully, touching or pointing to each one and keeping track as they go, they're building key math ideas: one-to-one correspondence, sequencing, and the understanding that the last number counted tells "how many." These skills give numbers meaning and lay the groundwork for addition, subtraction, and problem solving. Research shows that children with strong counting skills early on feel more confident and capable in math as they grow. By asking questions, modeling how to count, and encouraging children to explain their thinking, parents are creating opportunities for mathematical learning.

Counting Game - Go Shopping



Objective

Children practice careful, accurate counting and learn that counting the same set twice should lead to the same total. This builds a deeper understanding of one-to-one correspondence.

What You'll Need

A few small bags (pint or quart size)

A variety of fun, countable items such as goldfish crackers, your child's favorite cereal, M&M's, buttons, crayons, fun pencils, pasta or beans

Go Shopping Counting Items Game Sheet or paper to record the count

Directions

1. Gather several collections of items (depending on your child's grade) and place each in its own bag.
2. Invite your child to "Go Shopping" and choose one bag to count.
3. Have them gently pour out the items and count the items. On the first count, do not make any comments. Let them approach the task independently. This way you can see how they are counting items and if they are doing so efficiently and accurately.
4. Have them record the total.
5. Ask your child to count the same set again and record the second total. Talk about whether the counts match.
 - If they do not match, have them count a third time. This time make sure that they are touching and moving items as they count.
6. Encourage your child draw a picture showing how they counted the set.

Counting Guideline

Kindergarten:	fall: 10 items	winter: 15 items	spring: 20 items
First Grade:	fall: 20 items	winter: 40 items	spring: up to 120 items
Second Grade:	fall: 40 items	winter: 150 items	spring: up to 500

Activity Extension

1. Ask your child to count a different bag of objects.
2. You might also pick a bag to count yourself and model what efficient counting looks like (for example, touching and moving items as you count).

For first and second graders, try grouping the items in 5s or 10s to show that with larger sets, this is a quicker way to count. Your child may not be ready to count by 5s or 10s yet, and that's perfectly fine—you're simply showing another way to find the total.

Challenge Games

These activities are for children in grades 1 and 2 who are ready for an extra challenge.

1) Go Shopping - Combining Items

1. Instead of choosing a new bag and counting again, your child (or a parent-child team) can work on combining two or more collections to see how many there are altogether.
2. Use the Go Shopping Combining Game Sheet or a piece of paper and ask your child to draw a quick picture to figure out the question:
 - How many items are there altogether?

3. Have your child write the total they found.
4. Take the time to ask your child to share how they counted and figured out the answer to this question.

2) Go Shopping - Comparing Items More

1. Instead of choosing a new bag and counting again, your child (or a parent-child team) can work on comparing two or more collections to see which collection has more items.
2. Use the Go Shopping Comparing Items More Game Sheet or a piece of paper and ask your child to draw a quick picture to figure out the questions:

- Which bag has the most items?
- How many more items are in that bag?

3. Have your child write the answers they found for each question.
4. Take the time to ask your child to share how they counted and figured out the answers to questions.

3) Go Shopping - Comparing Items Less

1. Instead of choosing a new bag and counting again, your child (or a parent-child team) can work on comparing two or more collections to see which collection has fewer items.
2. Use the Go Shopping Comparing Items Less Game Sheet or a piece of paper and ask your child to draw a quick picture to figure out the questions:
 - Which bag has the fewest items?
 - How many fewer items are in that bag?
3. Have your child write the answers they found for each question.
4. Take the time to ask your child to share how they counted and figured out the answers to questions.

Go Shopping

Counting Items



What are you counting? _____

Number of Items in Bag

Count 1

Number of Items in Bag

Count 2

Draw a picture below to show how you counted.

Go Shopping

Comparing Items - Which has less?



What's inside Bag 1 _____

Number of Items in Bag

What's inside Bag 2 _____

Number of Items in Bag

Questions:

1) Which bag has fewer items?

Bag 1 Bag 2

2) How many fewer items are in that bag?

items

Draw a Picture

Go Shopping

Combining Items



What's inside Bag 1 _____

Number of Items in Bag

What's inside Bag 2 _____

Number of Items in Bag

Draw a Picture

How many items are there all together?

items

Go Shopping

Comparing Items - Which has more?



What's inside Bag 1 _____

Number of Items in Bag

What's inside Bag 2 _____

Number of Items in Bag

Questions:

- 1) Which bag has the most items?
- 2) How many more items are in that bag?

Bag 1 Bag 2

items

Draw a Picture