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Infants find counting is easy as 1-2-3  
  
**BYLINE:** Hayden Smith  
  
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MATHS really is kids' stuff - babies can do basic arithmetic by the age of 18 months, new research claims.

Infants choose to watch videos showing correct counting, rather than those where the sums don't add up, scientists have found.

It overturns previous theories that children only start to learn counting at the age of two, mastering the art by the age of four.

The study involved three experiments in which 17 and 18-month-old Australian and Japanese youngsters viewed different videos depicting six fish.

The correct version featuring a hand pointing to each fish was accompanied by verbal counting.

The other showed a hand wrongly moving between two of the six fish with the same commentary. They preferred to watch the correct counting footage.

But any preference for correct counting disappeared when the words were replaced by another language.

'These findings demonstrate that humans begin to learn to count earlier than previously thought,' said Professor Virginia Slaughter, of the University of Queensland.

'Children begin to count some time after age two and their skill develops over the next several years.

'But, before then, infants witness many instances of counting demonstrated by parents and older siblings.'

**TELEGRAPH**

**Toddlers can recognise basic maths**

Sentence Count = 14

Word Count = 312 (round to 310)

By [Richard Alleyne](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/richard-alleyne/), Science Correspondent

5:30AM GMT 16 Feb 2011

**Toddlers recognise basic arithmetic by the time they are 18-months-old, according to new research.**

A team of scientists found infants of this age choose to watch videos that depict correct counting, rather than those where the sums do not add up.

The vast majority of human cultures possess a routine for counting things and although this generally is not mastered until children are about four, the study demonstrates the principles are first learned in infancy.

Professor Virginia Slaughter, of the University of Queensland, and colleagues said: "These findings demonstrate that humans begin to learn to count earlier than previously thought, based on exposure to their cultural counting routine."

The study involved a series of experiments in which infants viewed different videos depicting six fish, with the correct version featuring a hand pointing to each fish in turn accompanied by verbal counting up to six and the other a hand wrongly moving between just two of the six fish with the same commentary.

One test of 36 Australian infants found 18-month-olds, but not 15-month-olds, significantly preferred to watch the correct counting sequence.

Prof Slaughter said: "These results show infants start to acquire the abstract principles governing correct counting prior to producing any counting behaviour.

"Children begin to count some time after age two and their skill develops over the next several years.

But before then, infants witness many instances of counting demonstrated by parents and older siblings, or portrayed on television.

"What, if anything, do very young children glean from this early exposure to counting?

"Our data suggest that between the ages of 15 and 18 months, infants begin to learn the abstract principles governing correct counting via exposure to their cultural counting routine.

"The preferential looking procedure we have developed offers a promising new direction for examining this issue further by revealing what infants learn about their cultural counting routine prior to producing the behaviour."

The findings were published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B

By Hayden Smith - 15th February, 2011

**METRO**

**Infants can count from 18 months of age, new research suggests**

**Word Count = 184 (round to 180)**

**Sentence Count = 12 (including title)**

**Maths really is kids’ stuff – babies can do basic arithmetic by the age of 18 months, new research from the University of Queensland claims**

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