

Beyond Counting: What is Preschool Mathematics?

When we think of math for preschoolers usually counting is the first thing that comes to mind. But early math is much more than just rote counting or even recognizing numerals. Those skills are important, but early math is also the preschoolers investigation into size, quantity, classification, patterns, space, time, and sequence.* The High Scope key experiences divides learning into five areas of mathematics: classification, seriation, number, space, and time. Listed below are examples of what these categories mean, and examples of activities that can help promote learning each category.



- ❑ **Classification:** Recognizing similarities and differences. Activities include sorting, matching, distinguishing and describing shapes, and distinguishing between "some" and "all".
- ❑ **Seriation:** Creating series and patterns. Activities include sorting by size from smallest to largest, distinguishing size (bigger than, smaller than) or by making a pattern (alternating red and blue beads).
- ❑ **Number:** comparing the number of things in two sets to determine more, fewer, or same. Arranging two sets of objects in one-to-one correspondence. Counting objects. Activities include counting objects aloud, commenting on more or less, and using written numbers during different parts of the daily routine.
- ❑ **Space:** Filling and emptying; fitting things together and taking them apart; changing the shape and arrangement of objects; observing people and places from different viewpoints; experiencing directions, positions, and distances. Activities include sand and water play with different size containers, climbing in and out of boxes, going over and under tables or equipment, and taking walks.
- ❑ **Time:** Starting and stopping an action on signal; experiencing and describing rates of movement; anticipating, remembering, and describing sequence of events. Activities include music and movement that starts and stops, recalling experiences such as a walk or a field trip, and anticipating future events.

*Epstein, PhD., Ann S., *Early Math: The Next Big Thing*. High/Scope ReSource, A Magazine for Educators, Summer 2003.