

ABC & 123

Exploring Letters and Numbers

Letters

Read alphabet books. Check the library for alphabet books, such as *Dr. Seuss's ABC: An Amazing Alphabet Book!* and *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault. These books feature letters on each page, with words and pictures to go along with them. As you read, have your youngster think of other words that begin with each letter.

Identify letters and sounds. Together, make a list of words that start with the same letter as your youngster's name. Or when you're traveling, help her look for signs with words that begin with her first name's first letter. Another idea is to write your child's name vertically on a piece of paper and let her try to think of a word that begins with each letter.

Play alphabet memory. Fold 26 index cards in half. With your child, write an uppercase letter on one-half and its lowercase version on the other. Continue until you have all the letters of the alphabet. Cut the cards apart, put them face down on a table, and mix them up. Take turns drawing two cards, trying to make an uppercase-lowercase match. As your youngster learns to recognize the letters, you can also talk about their sounds. Each time he turns a card over, have him name the letter, say the sound it usually makes, and think of a word that begins with it.

Numbers

Sing counting songs. Songs with numbers in their lyrics are terrific for practicing counting. Some ideas are "This Old Man" or "Five Little Monkeys." While you are singing, hold up the appropriate number of fingers for each verse so your youngster can see what the numbers mean. *Tip:* You can find the words to these songs and more at http://bussongs.com/counting_songs.php.

Count everything! Suggest that your youngster count the number of stairs in your house, spoonfuls of yogurt as she eats, or how many times the phone rings before you can answer it. Ask her to see how few steps she can take to get from the car to the house or down the hall. When you are standing in line or sitting in traffic, she can count the number of people or cars in front of you.

Play a number guessing game. Pick a number between 1 and 10. Have your youngster guess your number by giving him clues like "bigger," "smaller," "higher," and "lower." He will learn to put numbers in order and compare them.