



Help Your Child Measure And Compare!

Your child was born to learn! By the time your child is a toddler or a pre-schooler, he or she is ready to explore measuring and comparing. The more this happens at home, the better prepared your child will be for school. There is plenty you can do with everyday activities to strengthen these mathematical thinking skills. Try these suggestions:

YOUR INFANT:

- Hug, snuggle, kiss and talk to your baby. Play patty-cake and "This little piggy." Stimulating the senses prepares your child for the kind of thinking that will help him or her to solve problems later.
- Let your toddler play with safe kitchen objects such as plastic containers, measuring cups, spoons, metal pots, or bowls. Help your infant place objects inside one another or stack the objects. Talk with your child about what you are doing: "Look, this bowl fits inside the metal pot." "Oops! That cup is too big to fit inside. Let's see if we can find one that it will fit inside."

YOUR TODDLER:

- Let your toddler play with safe kitchen objects such as plastic containers and measuring cups or spoons in the bathtub. Let your child experiment. Help him or her fill the plastic cups or bowls with water.
- Use words such as "over," "under," "above," "on," and "next to" when talking with your toddler. "Let's put the top on the pan." "We need to pull your shirt over your head." "The scotch tape is on the shelf next to the paper."
- Help your child explore how things are the same or different. Show your child an egg. Ask your toddler to talk about it. For example, "Is the egg's shell hard or soft?" "What color is it?" "What do you think is inside?" Help your child break the egg into a plastic bowl. Ask your child to tell you how the egg is different.
- Help your child compare things. Bring in leaves and arrange them from smallest to biggest. Or arrange your child's books on the shelf from tallest to shortest.

YOUR PRE-SCHOOLER:

- Sit down with a set of plastic measuring cups and spoons and a tub or pail of water. Let your child fill the cups and spoons with water and play with them as you talk about how they work. Ask questions: "Which cup fills the tub the fastest? Why?"
- Help your child to weigh him or herself (or toys, or the dog) on the scale. Explain to your child what the weight is and what it means. Better yet, help your child keep a chart.
- Make an obstacle course with things to go over, under, through, and around. Talk about which obstacles your child goes "over," which ones he or she goes "under," and so on.
- Ask your child questions that compare things. "Which of those trees is taller?" "Which of us has more cereal?" "Is our car going faster or slower than the blue car?"

*ParentTips is a monthly resource for parents with young children.
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