Math, Math – It’s Everywhere If You Know Where to Look!
By Sherri Meyer, Early Childhood Coordinator

Math is everywhere around us. We often think that math is only taught and learned in elementary school, but that is far from being correct. There are many ways that we can introduce math and teach math on a daily basis. Math can be as simple as using math words (more, less, fewer, 1, 2, 3, some, many, etc), counting out loud what you see, matching pictures or sizes of items, or noticing similarities or differences in objects. Have fun with what you do with young children. Math is easy to incorporate into the day and you will be amazed at what children can learn. Following are some ideas for children ages birth to 5.

Math activities for Infants and Toddlers

- Next time you are rocking a baby in your group, sing a number song. Try singing to the tune of “Row, Row, Row, Your Boat.”
- Holding one of your infants, swing gently from side to side and count to the rhythm as you move.
- Putting baby on her tummy on a soft blanket, display a few toys. Count the toys as you display them.
- As the baby is rocking on his hands and knees, join him and count as he rocks and make up a chant.
- As you hold an infant, count his nose, his eyes, his ears. Then count yours. For toddlers, use a mirror to count the body parts.
- As toddlers walk up or down steps, count the steps.
- As you play outside, count the number of leaves, rocks, or flowers that you see.
- Use a laundry basket or other container that can hold safe, soft, balls. As the toddler takes out each ball, count the balls. Then make a game of throwing balls back into the basket and count them again.
- As you play on the playground, count the number of trees you see, the number of cars that drive by, etc.

Math Activities for Preschool Age Children

- Before going outdoors, take an inventory of what is needed (two mittens, one hat, one coat, two shoes, three balls, etc.)
- While outdoors, what amount or number of something (leaves, nuts, etc.) will fit into your pockets? This will also work indoors with other types of pockets and items.
How many giant steps does it take to walk from point A to point B, such as the sandbox to the tricycle?

Make a map of the classroom or playground and mark the routes that a child can take to move from one location to another. Then actually follow the map and walk the route.

During cleanup, put away all the round items, all the things that are not round, put away five things, etc.

Challenge children to: put your toes over your head, put your hand lower than your stomach, hold up a few fingers.

Put up to five items in your pocket. Have the children guess how many are there. Say “That’s too many, that’s too few” until they guess the correct amount.

Have children group themselves by their clothing (type of shirts, color of socks, type of shoes, length of sleeves, with or without belts, etc).

Make a graph of favorites (favorite sandwich, favorite animal, favorite color, favorite ice cream, etc) and then group the children together that have like similarities. Count children in each group and use words like “Favorite color blue group has five children and favorite color red group has three. The blue group has two more children than the red group.”

In the dress up center, be sure to include various types of clothing such as socks, mittens, and shirts. Encourage children to sort the clothes by color or type. Children can also practice folding clothes. Use words like “You folded your shirt in half” or “You matched the arms of your shirt.”

Look for children’s counting books, sing songs, and find math in the world around you. It’s there – you just have to identify it and have fun!

Here are just a few math words that you can incorporate into your daily activities. What other words will you use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full</th>
<th>Empty</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Whole</td>
<td>Half</td>
<td>Big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Under</td>
<td>Over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2009 WKU Child Care Resource and Referral

Funded in part by the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services through the University of Kentucky Research Foundation.

Equal Education and Employment Opportunities.