

Count me a story

What your child will learn:

Applying math in everyday settings

STEP 1

Tell your child simple story problems using numbers. Ask your child to help you with the story. Here is an example of a story you can tell and the question your child can help with.



Big Bear was out in the woods looking for juicy apples. She needed to gather 1 apple for each of her cubs. She had 3 cubs, BaBa Bear, TaTa Bear, and ZeZe Bear. How many apples did Big Bear need to gather so that she could give her cubs 1 apple each?

STEP 2

Talk about the story using the language of math. For example, you might tell your child that one of the bear cubs does not like apples. BaBa Bear likes carrots. If Big Bear needs apples only for TaTa Bear and ZeZe Bear, how many apples does Big Bear need? And how many carrots does she need?

STEP 3

As your child understands the idea of story problems, you can make the story more complex. For example:



It was Jackie's birthday. She had a special cake from the store. Jackie put 3 candles on her cake. Her mom put 3 more candles on the cake. How many candles altogether were on Jackie's cake? How old was Jackie?

📌 STEP 4

When your child answers a word problem, ask, “How did you get your answer?” The way your child thinks about a problem can be just as important as getting the correct answer.

📌 Make it Harder

As your child learns, include new math ideas in the stories.

Here are some examples:

- Don't forget zero! Try, “Caesar had 5 toy trucks. But 5 of them got lost. How many toy trucks does Caesar have left?”
- Try reversing “known” and “unknown” amounts. “Caesar had 5 toy trucks. He lost some and now he has 2 toy trucks. How many got lost?”
- Include both adding and subtracting in your stories.
- Have your child write down the numbers in the stories as math problems. For example, as you tell the story of Caesar’s trucks, have your child write down $5-5=0$.

Your child will not always get the math right but your child’s brain will get stronger just by trying. Whether your child gets the answer right or wrong, praise your child for thinking hard about the story problem.

+ Math is Everywhere

Make up stories about things you see everyday. Ask your child to make up stories with numbers. For example, if you drive to preschool, ask your child to make up a story about the 4 wheels on the car. Or to tell a math story about what happened in preschool. “If you were sitting at a table with 4 chairs total, and if there were children sitting in 3 of the chairs, how many of the chairs were empty?”