



ANGELA RUSS –AYON

**IT'S ALWAYS
MATH TIME!**

AbridgeClub.com
a Russ InVision site
P: 562-421-1836
E: info@abridgeclub.com
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- Composition: whole/pieces/parts
- Lines & pathways: straight, zigzag, wavy, curved, horizontal, diagonal, vertical, etc.
- Spatial sense: Positions and directions in space: up, down, forward, back, around, near, over, under, through, beneath, between, beside, etc.

EARLY MATH DEVELOPMENT INCLUDES LEARNING

THAT NUMBERS...

- 1) ...have a corresponding WORD
- 2) ...refer to a particular QUANTITY
- 3) ...can be represented in DIFFERENT WAYS
- 4) ...are used to COUNT
- 5) ...help us COMPARE and ORDER QUANTITIES.
- 6) ...are a MEANS for SOLVING PROBLEMS



- Sorting and matching
- The passage of time/routines
- Patterns

BEYOND THE STANDARDS, WE WANT CHILDREN TO...

- Be curious
- Keep working and persevere
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively
- Practice and build upon their skills
- Use appropriate tools strategically
- Share their findings
- Discuss & defend their results
- Feel comfortable and confident in their abilities

Young children are naturally curious, observant, and develop their own understanding of math over time - based on their life experiences. They build upon concepts they already know and have been exposed to, practicing early math skills every day.

EARLY MATH

Early math includes concepts other than number sense, counting, sizes, and shapes:

- Speed: fast/slow
- Measurement: empty/full, heavy/light, near/far

It's up to us to help make learning concepts fun. Model language and mathematical behavior!

Help children intuitively use math to:

- wait & be patient
- plan what to do
- share experiences & strategies
- predict possibilities
- accomplish goals
- examine their work
- reflect on what they are doing/have done
- solve problems
- discuss alternatives
- explore how and why questions
- justify thinking & actions

Alternative language tools when communicating with children:

- gestures
- physical activity
- pictures (in and out of books)
- songs
- games
- charts & polls
- diagrams & posters



MATHEMATIZE EACH DAY!

Math should be as common in informal settings as in any formal math activity. Help children make discoveries. Children often need fresh and new suggestions for what to do next. They often don't know what else they can do with what they have, nor do they know if they have permission to do it.

What would happen if you...?

Give children an **invitation** to take their learning to the next level and **permission** to explore further by asking open-ended questions that present an alternative to the actions they have taken - especially when play stalls. Open-ended questions cannot be answered with one word, such as yes, no, five, or yellow.

Always begin your open inquiry with the simplest form of question.

How do these fit together...?

What do you notice...?

Describe what you see.

Tell me about what you have.

CREATE SERVE AND RETURN EXPERIENCES

Ask thought-provoking questions (serve), then WAIT for children to process the information and formulate a response (return). You might be tempted to chime in and start teaching, but don't. Slow down your day and give children time to teach you!

USE MATH IN TRANSITIONS

- *How can you move with "1, 2, 3 Freeze" on the way to the door?*
- *How can you clean up before the countdown bell rings?*

- *Let's count down and "Blast-off!" like a rocket.*
- Form a caterpillar line and count steps together.
- Count small vs. large steps
- Find a certain number of objects in the room or outside
- Play "I Spy Shapes" or "Size," or "Colors."
- Arrange objects in a specific mathematical order (e.g., from smallest to largest, or thinnest to widest).
- Complete a motor skill any number of times.
- Touch a body part any number of times
- Release children by the shapes, colors, numbers, sizes, characteristics, etc. on /of their clothing.

EMBED MATHEMATICAL CONCEPTS throughout each day using terms and expressions that give children more exposure to math language.

Moving to commands using math language helps children understand spatial concepts and relationships.

Addition:

- Altogether
- Put together
- In all
- Mix
- Combine
- Include

Subtraction:

- How many are left?
- Take away/take out
- The difference between
- Minus
- Remove

Division:

- Equal parts
- Share equally
- Split it up
- Give each one
- Break apart
- Separate
- Distribute



ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO START A COLLECTION...

Preschoolers can develop foundational math skills through simple and enjoyable collecting activities. They use their observation skills to compare and contrast colors, shapes, sizes, weights, textures, age, condition, and other relevant characteristics. Ask children to bring items from home.

- *What do you notice about the items you have?*
- *Why did you add this one to your collection?*
- *How did you decide which ones to keep and which ones to leave behind?*
- *Why do you think this rock is rough and this one is smooth?*
- *How will you move your rocks inside if you don't have any pockets?*
- *Why do you think the rock sank to the bottom?*
- *What kind of names would you give these rocks based on their size / color?*

COLLECTIONS: Here are some ideas for items that can be collected to introduce and reinforce basic math concepts:

- **Blocks & manipulatives**
- **Buttons or beads** of various shapes and colors
- **Items in nature** like leaves, rocks or pebbles, acorns, seeds, sticks, or pinecones.
- **Seashells** can be a fun way to introduce counting, sorting, and comparing sizes.
- **Small toy cars or animals** can be grouped based on different criteria.
- **Stickers**
- **Cotton Balls or Pom-Poms**

- **Pretend fruit or vegetables:** plastic, fabric, or wooden fruits and vegetables can help children practice counting, sorting, and categorizing by food group.
- **Craft Stamps** with different shapes or patterns can be collected and used to create simple math-related art projects.
- **Plastic Bottle Caps**

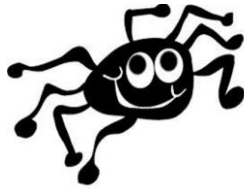


WHEN CHILDREN SING NURSERY RHYMES...

They learn the math skill of natural comparisons. Select a song or chant and emphasize the different tempos, tones, volumes, etc. Encourage children to duplicate the sounds and beats they hear by clapping, dancing, or playing an instrument.

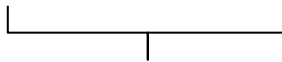
There are also wonderful opportunities to delve deeper into math concepts using lullabies and nursery rhymes:

- *What if no baby ducks came back to Mama?*
- *What happened after the first little monkey fell and bumped its head?*
- *In which direction does the spider go when he climbs the spout? Why?*
- *Do you think you can count the stars that are twinkling in the sky? Why? Why not?*
- *How can you tell which stars are bigger than the others?*
- *What happens when the clock strikes three?*
- *How much water do you think will fit in Jack and Jill's pail?*

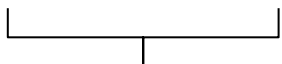


Rewrite popular nursery rhymes and lullabies to introduce MATH concepts. Be sure to count out the syllables and follow the same rhythm. Here is an example of a revised “The Itsy-Bitsy Spiders.”

The itsy-bitsy spider
crawled up the water SPOUT.
Down came the rain
and washed the spider OUT.
Out came the sun
and dried up all the RAIN.
And the itsy-bitsy spider
crawled up the spout AGAIN.



The itsy-bitsy spiders
came to visit me.
1, 2, 3, 4
in a family.
Brought 5 cookies
they just got for free.
So, I brewed the tiny spiders
a little pot of tea.



The itsy-bitsy spider
saw the number 4.
Took 4 steps, then
gently shut the door.
Thought, well maybe
I can add 1 more.
So, the itsy-bitsy spider
took 5 steps on the floor.

MOTOR SKILLS:

Direct children to move, count, and change direction - to speed up and slow down to the beat of a drum - or interpret the feeling or tempo of a song. Inject positional and descriptive math language when prompting to complete motor skills.

- *How do you know how far you jumped?*
- *Let's mimic animal moves while counting: flap, stomp, bear walk, step sideways (crab), etc.*
- *Show me how you would jump / sidestep/ hop/stomp_in a straight/zigzag/curved/ wavy line five times.*
- *How many hops do you think it would take to get to the other side of the room? Let's check and see.*
- *What do you have to do to make your body move fast/slow?*
- *How many claps can you do before I ring this bell? Let's see.*
- *What will happen if you change your steps from tiptoes to STOMPS?*

Research shows that when teachers ask children to communicate about things that are important to them, children are more likely to become engaged in a mathematical or data analysis process.

- NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) publications

More examples of open-ended, thought-provoking MATH questions that can be asked throughout the day ► ► ►



OUTSIDE

- *You broke the stick. What do you notice about it now?*
- *How do you know how much sand you need for the castle?*
- *How many times do you think we can catch it before we drop it? Let's see.*
- *What if you looked for different-shaped leaves?*
- *How can you arrange these sticks in a line from shortest to tallest?*
- *How can you make a shape using these rocks?*
- *How can you show me the number by jumping?*
- *What if you looked for something longer than/shorter than your shoe?*



MEALTIME

Introducing math to preschoolers at mealtime can be a fun and natural way to incorporate early mathematical concepts into their daily routines:

- Sort different food items into categories, such as fruits, vegetables, or proteins, and then eat it.
- Sort utensils or napkins by size or color.
 - *What's the difference between the fork and the spoon?*
 - *How do you know where the utensils go in the tray?*
- Compare the sizes, quantities, or shapes of different food items, tools, and objects on the table.
 - *Which apple is bigger, and which one is smaller?*
 - *Is your cup taller or shorter than your friend's cup? How can you tell?*
 - *Do you have more grapes or more carrot sticks? How do you know?*
 - *How can you tell which glass holds more milk? (measurement)*
 - *How do you know when to stop pouring?*
 - *Show me the different shapes you can make with your napkin?*
 - *Tell me about the shapes on your plate.* Point out circles (e.g., slices of cucumber), rectangles (e.g., a sandwich), or triangles (e.g., slices of pizza).
- Use cookie cutters to create fun and recognizable shapes with certain foods before dining.
- Use terms like "more/most" or "less/least" when serving portions and encourage children to use these words.
 - *How can we tell which fruit is liked the most?*
- Create simple patterns with different food items on the plate. For instance, arrange carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, and cucumber slices in a repeating pattern before serving them. Encourage your child to continue the pattern or create their own, and then eat.
- Sing simple math-related songs or rhymes while setting the table or cleaning up. Make them up on the spot using any familiar melody.



ARTWORK

Early childhood educators can seamlessly integrate math concepts into art activities like drawing, painting, and crafting, and introduce foundational mathematical concepts such as shapes, patterns, and spatial awareness. Encouraging children to explore geometric shapes in their artwork helps develop an early understanding of basic mathematical principles.

- **Cutting and pasting:** Measure and compare sizes during art projects.
- **Draw numbers, shapes, or pathways/lines** using paint, gems, playdough, sand, shaving cream, rocks and sticks, buttons, exposure to the sun, collages, sensory bags filled with colorful gels, and other manipulatives.
 - *What would happen if you pushed the red paint into the white paint?*
 - *How long do you think it will take the paint to dry?*
 - *Tell me about the different shapes/sizes/colors in your picture.*
 - *How many dots/lines/shapes/colors do you think there are in your drawing? How can you check?*
 - *What happens if you add more dots (or lines, or shapes) to your drawing?*
 - *How can you share the materials with your friend?*



DRAMATIC PLAY

- *How did you know which sweater would fit your doll?*
- *How can you sort your toys into two groups, like soft and hard toys?*
- *What's the difference between these cookies and those donuts?*
- *What if you made a parking space for each car? How will the drivers know which space is theirs?*
- *How do you know how many sandwiches to pack for your teddy bear picnic?*
- *How do you know if you have enough money to pay the bill?*



STORYTIME

- *What do you think this story is about?*
- *What happened first/next/last in the story?*
- *How did the Hungry Caterpillar get so big?*
- *How can we make a very long caterpillar?*
- *What's the difference between one fish and two fish?*
- *What will happen if she eats all three bowls of porridge?*
- *Which fish has more scales, the Rainbow Fish at the beginning or the one at the end? Why do you say that?*
- *Show me the fish that is above / below / beside the Rainbow Fish?*

CIRCLE TIME

- *How can we all sit where we won't trip our friends?*
- *How do we know it's Monday?*
- *When I ask you to sit on the square, how do you know where to sit?*
- *What will happen if there aren't enough books for all of you to pick one?*
- *How would you describe this book/toy/instrument?*
- *Would you rather be as small as an ant or as big as an elephant? Why?*
- *What is the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning/get home?*
- *What does it mean when someone has a birthday?*
- *What does your friend mean when they say they are four years old?*



PATTERNING & SEQUENCING

Most everything in our world has a logical order, and we understand events in our lives by understanding the logical order in which they occur.

Skip counting, addition, and times tables all require an understanding of and proficiency in patterning, as do everyday activities in our lives.

- We buy tickets for an event.
- We go to the venue.
- We present our tickets for entry.
- We find our section, row, then seat.

Relate patterns to real-life experiences that can be seen, recognized, and experienced.

Patterns and sequences that are put to a melody are easier to recognize and extend.

Activities involving patterns and sequencing, include creating bead necklaces, threading colored buttons, drawing repeating designs, etc.

- *Show me a pattern you created with your art materials.*

Developmental stages for patterns:

- Recognize
- Describe
- Copy
- Extend
- Create



GEOMETRY, ENGINEERING, AND DESIGN:

When children play with blocks and puzzles, we expand their understanding of geometry & engineering. There are examples of design and engineering in everyday objects.

Consider the different concepts found in design and engineering:

- **Length & number of sides**
 - *What's the difference between the triangle and the square?*
- **Size & number of angles**
 - *How can you build a pen to hold all the piglets?*
 - *What do you have to do to make room for a door?*
 - *How will you keep water out if it rains?*
- **2 vs. 3 dimensions**
 - *How can you turn your squares into a box?*
- **Curved vs. straight lines**
 - *Show me how your arms would look if they were straight/curved.*
- **Comparing & contrasting**
 - *What's the difference between the pen and the barn?*

- **How shapes form & fit together**
 - *That's cool. How did you know those pieces fit together?*
- **Composition / decomposition, construct / deconstruct, combine / separate:**

This can help children understand that a larger object can be broken down into smaller parts.

 - Construct and deconstruct playdough creations or block structures.
 - Create different shapes, animals, or objects using playdough by combining smaller pieces, and then taking them apart.
 - Count the objects: Create a group by combining a specific number of items. Separate and sort the objects into smaller sets using their attributes reinforcing the concept of breaking down a whole into its parts. Recount.
 - Gather natural materials like leaves, sticks, and flowers to create a collage. Identify the different components.
 - Read a story or create one. After telling the story, discuss each character and scene separately.

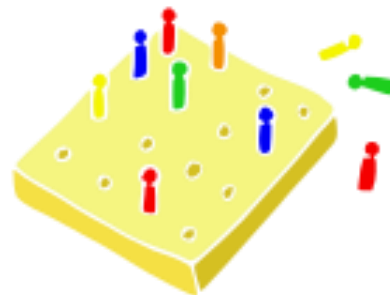
- **Problem-solving**
 - *What else can you try?*
 - *What if more people want to walk on the bridge?*
 - *How can you keep the tower from falling?*
 - *How can you make the track long enough to reach the wall?*
- **Symmetry (identical reflection)**
 - *How can you make the other side look the same?*



TIME

- Observe changes in the environment
- Sing songs and chants that reference time:
- Prep and cook

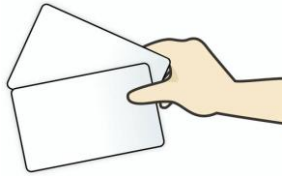
- Refer to the clock and calendar in your daily routine
- Reference the calendar often
- Mark milestones: birthdays, field trips, etc.
- Waiting patiently: play simple games
 - Guess which hand (coin, small object)
 - I spy...
 - Guess which animal given clues
 - Clapping game
- Time or count up/down to activities and events
- Review daily routines and reference the time of day with consistently: *soon, yesterday, today. We wash our hands before we eat...*
- Use stories that incorporate concepts of time, review the sequence/order of events



TAKING MATH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

When a child proudly displays his peg board with all the holes filled using different colored pegs, he is serving you his work. Now, return to the child with an open suggestion on what to do next.

- *How can you group the colors together?*
- *How can you arrange the pegs by color/size (length, width, height, or volume)?*
- *How do the pegs fit on top of /into each other?*
- *What if you made a pattern?*
- *How can you use the pegs to make different lines/shapes?*
- *What if you built something with those pegs?*
- *Tell me about what you did.*
- *What else can you do with your pegs?*



SOME SIMPLE EARLY MATH GAMES can help children recognize numerals or count.

Passing Game: Circle Count!

Just a reminder that young children hesitate to pass items they want to keep because they don't think they will get them back. Passing is a skill all by itself.

1. Children sit or stand in a circle.
2. Pass an object around and count together as the object is passed.
3. Slow down or speed up!

1. Number CARD Game: Stand Up - Sit Down

Stand when you see the number 1 and say the number out loud and sit when you see a 2.

2. Change the numbers.

○ **Number CARD Game: Pick or Roll, and Move!**

1. Roll dice or pick a card.
2. Add that number of manipulatives to the group, bucket, etc.
3. Expand on this by having the children toss back and forth that number of times or toss bean bags into receptacles.

○ **Number CARD Game: Pick or Roll, and Make!**

1. Roll dice or pick a card.
2. Construct the number with paint, clay, pipe cleaners, laces, drawn in sand, etc.

○ **Number Game: Seek & Find**

1. Cut large numbers out of cardboard (can use number cards or plastic numbers)
2. Hide them inside or outside.
3. Challenge the children to go find them.
4. Expand on this by asking the children to work together to put them in numerical order.

○ **Number Game: Find a Friend!**

1. Find a peer by hunting for a matching number written on paper or paper plates they are wearing or holding.
2. Switch numbers and go again!

○ **Number CARD Game: Mice & Elephants!**

1. Display number cards and say the number.
2. Children expand their bodies bigger or smaller depending upon whether the next numbers are greater or fewer.

Music Reference List:

♪ "When I See Shapes"

CD: *Math Music & Motion*

♪ "Shake, Mix, Pound, Roll"

CD: *Smart and Tasty 1*

♪ "Two Clapping Hands"

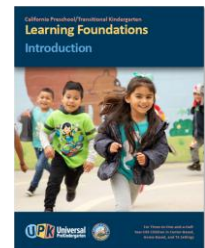
CD: *Math Music & Motion*

♪ "Shake Your Boom Boom"

CD: *Smart Moves 3*



CA Preschool and Transitional Kindergarten Foundations (2025)



Resource Book: *The BIG Book of Open-Ended Questions to Intentionally Support Young Children in Learning*
ISBN: 978—1-958627-07-5

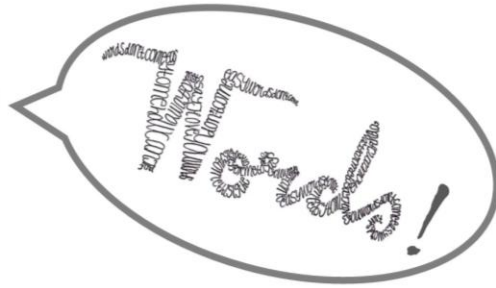
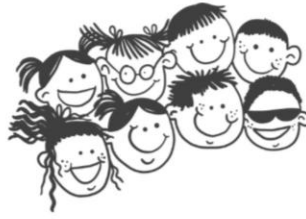
Free Math Reading Guides:

DREME – Develop and Research in Early Math Education, out of Stanford University, has created FREE math reading guides based on over 60 explicit and implicit storybooks. Online and in PDF format.

<https://familymath.stanford.edu/activities/reading-together/?lang=english&role=preschoolers>

**Thank you for listening,
and welcome to the CLUB!
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The Language of Math



Top | Bottom
 Above | Below
 Up | Down | Upside down
 Over | Under | Beneath
 Front | Back | Behind
 Next to | Beside
 Between | Through
 Around | Across
 In | Out
 Within | Among
 On | Off
 Center | Middle
 Inside | Outside
 Left | Right
 Toward | Away from
 Close to | Far from
 Near | Far
 Farther | Farthest
 Backward | Forward
 Lead | Follow
 Sideways
 Balance

Fast | Faster | Fastest
 Slow | Slower | Slowest
 Tall | Taller | Tallest
 Short | Shorter | Shortest
 Long | Longer | Longest
 Small | Smaller | Smallest
 Big | Bigger | Biggest
 Thin | Thinner | Thinnest
 Slim | Slimmer | Slimmest
 Thick | Thicker | Thickest
 Wide | Wider | Widest

Narrow | Narrower
 Large | Larger | Largest
 High | Higher | Highest
 Low | Lower | Lowest

Stop | Go | Continue
 Begin | Start
 Finish | Complete | End
 First | Second | Third...
 Next | Then
 Last | Finally
 Now | Later
 Before | After
 Alike | Similar
 Same | Different
 Zero | None | Nothing
 Every | All
 Few | Some | Many
 More | Less
 Most | Least
 More than | Less than
 Equal | Not Equal to
 A little | A lot
 How many?
 What's left?
 Add to | Take away from
 Add | Subtract
 Together | Apart
 Full | Empty
 All | None | Zero
 Almost enough
 Half | Medium
 Half way | Midway
 Single | Double | Pair

Multiple | Set
 Piece | Part | Whole
 Slice | Section
 Even | Odd
 Heavy | Heavier | Heaviest
 Light | Lighter | Lightest

Line | Point
 Straight | Curved | Wavy
 Zigzag
 Horizontal | Vertical
 Diagonal
 Parallel/Perpendicular
 Cross | Connect | Meet
 Angle | Corner
 Flat | Even | Uneven
 Side | Edge
 Surface
 Dot | Spot | Point
 Arrow

Circle	Sphere
Triangle	Pyramid
Square	Cube
Rectangle	Prism
Oval	Cone
Heart	
Rhombus	
Diamond	
Star	
Crescent	
Hexagon (6)	
Heptagon (7)	
Octagon (8)	