

Building Blocks: Helping Children Learn New Concepts

Check It Out

Alligators All Around

by Maurice Sendak
(Grades Pre-K–1)

The author of *Where the Wild Things Are* brings us into the lives of three very busy alligators as their activities take them through the alphabet from A to Z.

Alphabet Under Construction

by Denise Fleming
(Grades Pre-K–1)

Busy mouse finds many creative ways to construct the alphabet.

L Is for the Last Frontier

by Carol Crane
(Grades Pre-K–2)

This book celebrates our 49th state by guiding us through an alphabet's worth of Alaskan culture, landscape, and animals.

One Is a Snail, Ten Is a Crab

by April Pulley Sayre
(Grades K–1)

In this creative approach to counting, Sayre counts the number of feet animals have, by ones to 10, and then by 10s to 100.

Teeth, Tails, and Tentacles

by Christopher Wormell
(Grades Pre-K–2)

Beautifully depicted illustrations enhance various animal parts and their numbers.

Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin

by Lloyd Moss
(Grades K–2)

Counting has never been such fun as when you count instruments as they are added to the orchestra.

Activities

- While doing routine tasks such as driving in the car, ask your child to name a letter, then take turns coming up with words that start with that letter.
- Try guessing and counting things whenever possible. For instance, ask your child to guess how many groceries you have in your cart, or how many pieces of corn he has on a dinner plate. Have your child count to see if his guess is close.
- Keep a tape measure or yardstick handy to help your child measure items and spaces around your home. Ask her to measure the furniture in the room and make comparisons between items. Ask questions like, "Is this chest of drawers bigger than the refrigerator?" Or say, "I wonder if the chair will fit where the table is now."
- Write down a word with lots of letters such as *multiplication*, *president*, or *Washington*. Take turns finding smaller words using the letters within the larger word. Word games such as Scrabble™, hangman, and Boggle™ can also help your children improve spelling and word building skills.

Table Talk

Identify all the items on your plates or a handful of objects in the room. Take turns saying and spelling each item out loud, or only spell the word aloud and have your child tell you what it is.

Family Field Trip

Take a theme walk around your neighborhood. Theme walks should highlight new concepts your child is learning such as reading, spelling, or vocabulary. Select a theme for your walk such as signs or businesses; then look for words your child can practice reading or spelling.