

## EY Southwest Stronger Practice Hub blog: Teaching the Association between Numbers and Counting



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Heidi Price is the CEO for the IDEAL Alliance, which is made up of a primary school, two nursery schools, two PVI daycare provisions, the Speech & Language Advisory Support for the City of Plymouth & the Early Years Southwest Stronger Practice Hub. Here, she explores how the Alliance has used the EEF Early years Evidence Store to develop professional practice across the alliance.

**Blog: 2-minute read, Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

One of the key areas of learning for our early years children is around developing early maths. If we can foster a love of learning about maths concepts when children are at their youngest, then this creates the building blocks for them to develop their mathematical knowledge as they grow and develop. Children have a natural fascination with their surroundings, and this is a great starting point to enable them to engage in some early mathematical reasoning.

The Education Endowment Fund (EEF) have created an excellent web-based resource to support our early years workforce in enabling young children to develop a wide range of mathematical skills. (EEF 2024). The site explains that children need a wide range of experiences in order to build mathematical concepts. Mathematical language enables children to express their understanding and repetition of concepts through a variety of mediums helps to embed this complex understanding.

Take the simple rules of counting: initially a child will enjoy counting a set of objects and repeating this many times, placing the objects in a pattern as they chant the numbers to find out how many objects there are. They may also enjoy putting the numbers into the correct order as they become more familiar about the patterns. As they become more confident with this, they may well start to recognise the size of a small set of objects without having to count as they develop a skill called 'subitising'. For example, they may recognise five dots on a dice without counting them because of the pattern of the dots.

The key skill that is most useful to develop in this area of maths is one to one correspondence. As children reinforce this concept then they develop their number fluency which helps them to build more complex concepts. Some examples of activities to promote these skills include naming and labelling objects, estimating amounts, adult modelling to emphasise the one-to-one correspondence, eg. "Wow! You have three bananas and one more is four!" and visualising where the adult describes the maths so the child can follow, eg. 'Look, I had two apples and I gave one to Freddie which means I only have one now!'

## Next steps

Why not visit the EEF Evidence store and have a look at the videos that show great examples of practitioners develop early mathematical understanding through simple games and activities.

References:

Education Endowment Foundation (2023) The Early Years Evidence Store: Teaching the Association between Numbers and Counting [Online resource] Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/early-mathematics?approach=teaching-association-between-number-and-quantity>

This blog can be found on the Early Years Southwest Stronger Practice website [here](#).