

WHAT DOES MATHS LOOK LIKE FOR 0 TO 2 YEAR OLDS WITHIN A NURSERY

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Tuning into how a young child thinks can be deeply rewarding.

Children learn by repeating small, sensory moments: anticipate, look, listen, copy, explore, wonder, touch, taste, smell, hold, move. These simple actions create a rich foundation. If we offer calm, purposeful experiences and return to them often, we help curiosity grow and understanding deepen.

REPEAT EXPERIENCES OFFER POWERFUL LEARNING.

Children explore by looking, touching, copying and moving – and each return helps ideas take root. The child's mind is like a cup we gently fill with meaningful, simple activities that spark curiosity and understanding. With thoughtful planning, we create spaces that are rich, rewarding, and pleasantly uncluttered.

Beginning this journey from birth can develop an ever-growing learning within a child. Loose parts offer tools to deliver a purpose in learning where children can use all these senses to manipulate and position objects and resources to nurture the inner inquisitive mind.

With a 'LESS IS MORE' approach, along with effective reflection and understanding of children's learning, we as practitioners can nurture an environment that is rewarding and stimulating yet calm and unhurried.

With regards to resources, objects and materials, think 'LESS' then think 'LESS' again.

Some examples to add into spaces:

- Treasure baskets (metal, brushes, sponges, wood, black and white, balls and pom poms)
- Wooden bobbins, people, cars
- Shells, stones of suitable sizes for ages of children
- Ribbons
- Blocks



SIMPLE TALK BUILDS LANGUAGE.

Use small, sensory steps: say a word, sing a line, tell a short story, then repeat and expand during play. Move from single words to phrases, e.g. 'car' → 'big red car' → 'big, red, fast car.'

Narrate actions and changes: 'It's heavy, now it's heavier'. Then 'empty' and 'all gone'. Keep comments short, observe first and add words beside play to support curiosity and deeper understanding.

Keep talk simple and timely while a child plays.

Babies and toddlers explore size, shape, space, pattern, movement, cause and effect and quantity through play, sensory exploration, relationship and repeated experiences.

Within the Curiosity Approach ethos, maths is wonder, exploration, connection, and noticing patterns in the world. For example:

- Dropping spoons repeatedly
- Kicking legs
- Reaching for objects
- Peekaboo
- Songs and rhymes

Mathematical learning:

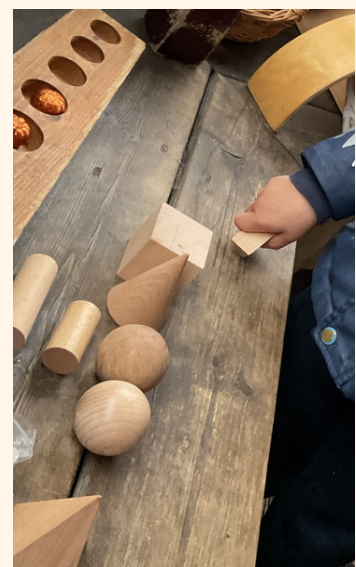
- Cause and effect
- Object permanence
- Prediction
- Pattern
- Spatial awareness

Children begin exploring through:

- Transporting
- Stacking
- Posting
- Hiding
- Matching
- Comparing

Examples:

- Carrying objects around
- Putting lids on containers
- Climbing
- Lining objects up
- Filling baskets



SOMETHING TO TRY

When you think you have less resources, look and think LESS again.
Keep it simple, enjoy.

Open your mind to the idea that simple, practical, safe loose parts with a 'LESS IS MORE' approach, could be a step in a new direction within your setting.

WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

Take a closer look at some information on the EEF store with this link.
Teaching the association between number and quantity to start with, then explore the other titles within this section:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/early-mathematics/teaching-association-between-number-and-quantity>

**LIKE THIS CASE STUDY?
PLEASE LEAVE FEEDBACK HERE**



https://docs.google.com/forms/d/14RZ1rrEvWvj27aEtv25p68YsMKWINeqtDTmGH_ympl4/viewform?edit_requested=true



THANK YOU FOR READING

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