

How Counting Develops (but Children Vary!) and How Practitioners Can Help

1 & 2 Year Olds

- Say some number words, maybe in order
- Say numbers while pointing to objects.

Practitioners can provide regular experiences of:

- Singing number rhymes, like *Round and round the garden* or *One, two three four five, once I saw a fish alive*
[Bookbug Song and Rhyme Library](#)
[Bookbug's Songs and Rhymes app](#) (see counting songs)
- Talking about numbers of things in everyday contexts and counting aloud to find 'how many' e.g. bananas, yoghurts, children, birds
- Counting to small and large numbers indoors and out (fingers/toes, stairs, toys, food items, passing cars, sounds, actions)
- Drawing attention to changes in number and counting up or down e.g. finding/hiding toys or eating things up.

3 Year Olds

- Say numbers to five or 10 in order
- Begin to count objects, actions and sounds
- Tag one number to each item, but sometimes skip one or tag one twice
- May count out three or four things from a larger group.

4 Year Olds

- Say numbers to 20 or beyond (but often miss out 13)
- May count out five or more things
- Begin to count things arranged irregularly, which cannot be moved.

Practitioners can do all of the activities for younger children, plus

- Music time
 - Act out number rhymes and songs with props
 - Count forwards and backwards to and from 10 and beyond, with actions and sounds such as claps, jumps or drum beats
- Snack and meal times
 - Ask children to give you four pieces of apple or get four spoons
 - Encourage children to count resources and snack items to see if there are enough

- Tidy up time
 - Count to check that nothing has gone missing
- Challenge activities e.g. treasure hunts: How many:
 - Shells can you find in the sand?
 - 'Fish' can you catch with the net?
 - Peas can you pick up with the tweezers?
 - Conkers can you collect?
 - Worms can you dig up?
 - Hops or star jumps can you do?
- Games
 - Target games e.g. beanbags in a bucket or skittles
 - With simple dice, collecting a number of things to fill a board
 - Jumping along a track.

Optional reading: [Developing Number Through Tidying Up](#)