

Top Tips for...Mathematical Stories

Stories and their illustrations can offer a fantastic way to introduce and explore mathematical concepts and language. Try our top tips to help you engage children in mathematical thinking and interactive stories.

- Give time and space for children to comment and ask questions about what they see and hear
- Support subitising opportunities by pointing out small groups of things on the page, e.g. “there are two robots here and three over there”
- Count the things you see, remembering to confirm the cardinal number, e.g. “one, two, three, four... that’s four lizards altogether”
- Use your fingers to represent numbers 1-10, e.g. “Handa’s grandma has one black hen” while holding up one finger
- Point out patterns you see, e.g. “those butterflies both have spots on their wings”
- Use gestures alongside mathematical language to convey meaning, e.g. hands far apart for “huge” and hands close together for “small”
- Use open ended questions to encourage problem solving by starting questions with “who”, “what” and “why”
- Use positional language when commenting on what you see, e.g. “the children are going across the field, over the mud and inside the bear cave”
- Encourage children to make comparisons, e.g. “which animal is the biggest?”
- Add humour by making ludicrous statements about what you see, e.g. “I think you could fit a million animals in that house!”
- Support children to recognise pattern in stories by predicting what comes next, e.g. “after the children went through the mud, what happened next?”
- Focus on pattern in spoken word by stomping or clapping along to the rhythm of the story.

