



NUMBER RECOGNITION AND SUBITIZING

It is important that children become familiar and comfortable with numbers and the relationship between numbers. This helps them make sense of what numbers mean within stories and everyday conversation.

What is number recognition? Number recognition is the ability to tell *how many* objects are in a small set without counting them (given all the time they need to observe the group of objects). We distinguish this skill from subitizing (defined below) because children recognize how many are in a small set but may not do so quickly.

What is subitizing? Subitizing is the ability to tell how many objects are in a group *quickly* without counting them.

Infants and toddlers can recognize small groups of up to three objects. For example, children may say “one mommy,” “two cars,” or “three crackers.” **By three years old**, they may put their toys or objects into groups of up to three. This is called **perceptual subitizing**.

Preschoolers, after learning perceptual subitizing up to and beyond 4, can begin to see parts of multiple small sets of objects and can quickly put together the total number of objects without counting. For example, a child might say, “I knew there was 6 because I saw 4 here and 2 there.” This is called **conceptual subitizing**.

Why is subitizing important? Subitizing helps your child understand numbers and compare groups. These skills help children place numbers in the correct order, which lays the foundation for addition, subtraction, and understanding number’s sizes. Subitizing is often visual, such as seeing dogs playing and immediately saying, “Three doggies!” However, subitizing should also include identifying how many actions are in a rhythmic sequence. For instance, children may hear you beat a drum three times and tell you exactly how many beats you made.



WHAT IS ONE QUICK AND EASY WAY I CAN TEACH MY CHILD SUBITIZING?

LABEL NUMBERS EVERYWHERE!

Labeling things all day can help your child recognize and eventually subitize small groups of objects. For example, you might use the following statements with your child throughout the day:

- When picking up toys, say, “Please put those **two** dolls in the box.”
- When driving or walking, say, “Look at those **three** red cars.”
- When getting dressed, ask, “**How many** buttons are on your shirt?”
- When eating a meal, ask, “**How many** crackers do you have on your plate?”

