Busy Kids®

ABCs & 123s

Ideas for Teaching Basic Skills and Concepts

Fun Themes Include:
- Circus
- Dinosaurs
- Family
- Garden
- Leaves
- Nursery Rhymes
- Ocean
- Self-Awareness
- Spiders and Bats
- Thanksgiving
- Transportation
- Zoo
- And Many More!
Busy Kids®
ABCs & 123s
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Introduction

Provide your little ones with the building blocks for school success with Busy Kids®: ABCs & 123s. Just turn the page to find fun and creative ideas for teaching basic concepts and building basic skills. Based on more than 25 favorite early-childhood themes, the ideas in this book provide preschool and kindergarten teachers with activities for teaching letters, numbers, colors, shapes, counting, graphing, patterning, and so much more!

Tips for Building Basic Skills:

• Basics don’t have to be boring! Add some fun to every lesson.
• Be sure the concepts and skills you introduce match your students’ developmental levels.
• It’s especially important to provide opportunities for hands-on learning when teaching a new skill.
• Reinforce skills as needed with individual or small-group practice.
• If the youngsters you work with vary in age, introduce concepts and skills in groups or provide adaptations to meet everyone’s abilities.
• Review concepts and skills as needed, until you’ve built a strong foundation!
MATCHING BUNNY EARS

“Hare’s” a matching activity that’s sure to lead your little bunnies down the trail to skills development! To prepare, copy page 58 onto tagboard. Color the bunny, cut it out, and laminate it. Use a craft knife to make slits in the ears as indicated. Program the strips for the matching skill of your choice—uppercase and lowercase letters, numerals and dot sets, colors, or shapes. If desired, make multiple sets of strips and program as many different skills as desired. For ease of use, make each set of matching strips a different color. Laminate all the strips for durability.

To use this center, a child threads a set of strips through the ear slits as shown. She adjusts the strips to expose the matches. For an added challenge, provide paper and crayons and have kindergartners record each matched pair they find.

SOLID, STRIPES, SPOTS

Give your little ones “eggs-tra” practice in patterning using solid, striped, and spotted eggs. In advance, cut out a class supply of large oval eggs from white construction paper. Distribute the eggs; then invite each child to decorate his egg with a solid color, with stripes, or with spots. Then invite three youngsters—each with a different egg pattern—to stand side by side so that the class can see their eggs. Note the pattern created by the group. Then have more students join the line, repeating the pattern. Continue until the pattern can no longer be extended. Then start over, creating a different pattern. After several rounds, keep things hoppin’ by inviting youngsters to direct themselves in creating patterns.
Bunnies that Measure Up

Perk up measuring, counting, and numeral-writing skills with the help of some bunny ears. To begin, copy the bunny pattern on page 58. Mask the ears on the copy; then enlarge and make four copies of the bunny face on pink construction paper. Cut out pairs of pink bunny ears in four different sizes. Laminate all the cutouts for durability. Put them in a center along with jelly beans and a wipe-off marker.

To use this center, a child gives each bunny face a pair of matching ears. She uses jelly beans to measure one ear in each pair from bottom to top. Then she counts the jelly beans and records the corresponding numeral on the other ear. After the child finishes with all four bunnies, invite her to eat the jelly beans she used for the activity. To prepare the pieces for the next child, simply wipe the numerals off the ears with a paper towel.

How Many Green Beans?

Your little bunnies will explore colors, graphing, and counting with this basketful of jelly beans. To prepare, gather a small-group supply of plastic eggs. Put ten jelly beans in each egg. Create a basket-shaped graph (as shown) on chart paper; then tape a different colored jelly bean to the top of each column. Place the graph on the floor and seat a small group of youngsters around it; then give each child an egg to open. Ask him to sort his jelly beans by color. Then have each child, in turn, place his jelly beans on the corresponding columns of the graph. Finally, recite the rhyme below to prompt the class to chorally count the jelly beans in each column. Repeat the rhyme, substituting a different jelly bean color each time. Then compare the results. Of which color are there the most jelly beans? The fewest? Are there the same number of any colors? Wow! This basket is full of learning!

[Bgreen, green] jelly beans.
How many [green] beans have you seen?

Bunny Orders

Watch your little bunnies hop into action with this fun listen-and-do game. Provide each child with a plastic egg. Then recite the rhyme shown, filling in the blank with a positional phrase. Use a different phrase each time you repeat the rhyme. Then check to make sure “every-bunny” follows the directions correctly.

“Every-bunny” listen now
To what I have to say.
Place your egg [under a chair],
In a funny, bunny way.
How many days till Christmas?
This chain will help you count.
Cut one candy off each day.
You’ve got the right amount.
When the candy is all gone,
You ring the bell and say,
“Peace and joy and love to all.
Tomorrow is Christmas Day!”

Christmas Countdown
Help anxious youngsters count down the days until Christmas with this candy chain. To prepare, purchase or ask parents to donate enough individually wrapped candies so that you have seven per child. Seven days before Christmas, have each child place his candies in a row down the middle of a 28-inch length of plastic wrap. Help him wrap his candies in the plastic as shown. Then have him tie a length of curling ribbon around the plastic wrap between each candy and at each end of the chain. Invite the child to tie a jingle bell and a copy of the poem shown onto the ribbon at one end of the chain. Invite children to take their candy countdown chains home or to use them at school, cutting off one piece of candy each day until Christmas.

Yum-Yum Tree
Oh, Christmas tree! Oh, Christmas tree! How yummy are your branches! That’s what youngsters will think when they play Christmas Tree Bingo. To prepare, gather small candies such as holiday M&M’s® or gumdrops. Program index cards with Christmas-related words that begin with different consonants. To make gameboards, draw a simple Christmas tree on several sheets of green construction paper. Randomly program each tree with several words corresponding to those on the index cards.

To play, give each child in a small group a gameboard and some candy. Read a word card to the group. Encourage each child to use his knowledge of beginning sounds to try to find that word on his gameboard. Have him mark it with a piece of candy. To check for accuracy, show youngsters the word card. Adapt this game for younger children by programming the notecards and gameboards with matching Christmas stickers. When a child covers his entire tree, invite him to eat his candies. Yum! Yum!
ABC Garland

Decorate your classroom for the holidays with this alphabet garland. In advance, drape a Christmas garland along a bulletin board, window, or wall. Then write the alphabet down the left side of a sheet of chart paper. Over several days, have your little elves brainstorm Christmas-related words that begin with each letter. List their responses on the chart paper. Once the list is complete, assign one letter to each child. (Invite volunteers to take any leftover letters.) Encourage her to choose a word beginning with her letter from the list and illustrate it on a construction paper circle. On the back of the circle—or ornament—write her dictated description, such as “C is for candy cane.” Punch a hole in each ornament; then insert an ornament hanger in the hole. Invite students to hang their ornaments in alphabetical order on the garland.

Jingle All the Way

Youngsters love to sing “Jingle Bells” at Christmas-time. So they’re sure to love this read-along sing-along using their own jingle-bell pointers. In advance, write the song’s chorus on chart paper. Then write each word of the chorus on a separate sentence strip length. Back each strip with magnetic tape. To make a pointer, each child folds a pipe cleaner in half. He strings three small jingle bells down to the fold and then twists together the free ends of the pipe cleaner. Then he inserts the twisted pipe cleaner snugly into a skinny straw until only the bells show. To use the pointer, each child, in turn, leads the class in singing the song, using his pointer to point to each word. When each student masters the one-to-one correspondence of spoken to written words, challenge him to sequence the word strips on a magnetic board. (Display the chart paper song as a reference.) Your little ones will be jingling all the way to beginning reading!

Holiday Card Match

“Ho-ho-hold” onto those used holiday cards to reinforce sorting and beginning sounds. Collect a variety of cards with simple holiday pictures (preferably with only one item on the front, such as a bell or a reindeer). Cut off the card fronts; then label each one with the beginning letter and the word shown in the picture. Help your students identify each picture and letter. Then place the cards in a center. Invite a child to sort them, either by similar pictures or by matching beginning sounds.
**Colorful Clown Hair**

Entice youngsters to clown around with this activity focusing on colors and color words. Draw a simple clown head as shown. Duplicate the drawing onto several sheets of white construction paper; then color each clown’s facial features, but not the hair. Label each bow tie with a color word, such as **red**, **yellow**, or **purple**. (For younger students, use corresponding markers to write the color words.) Laminate the clowns; then place them in a center with food coloring, shaving cream, paper towels, and paintbrushes.

A child at this center squirts some shaving cream onto a clown’s hair. She finds the food coloring (or color combination) corresponding to the color word on the bow tie and then squeezes a few drops onto the shaving cream. She blends the color into the shaving cream with a paintbrush and then paints the clown’s hair with the mixture. She paints the hair on the other clowns in a similar fashion. Then she wipes the hair colors off with a paper towel to prepare the center for the next clown-hair stylist.

**Big Shoes to Fill**

Step right into some measurement practice with the help of some clown shoes. Visit your local party-supply store and purchase a pair of clown shoes. Draw the outline of a clown shoe on paper; then program the outline with “_____ the clown walked a tightrope today! It was _____ clown feet long.” Duplicate a class supply of the shoe pattern onto red construction paper. Then stretch a long rope across the floor. Invite each child, in turn, to put on the shoes. Have her walk the “tightrope” heel-to-toe as she counts each step. Help her record her name and the number of steps taken on her shoe pattern. Then instruct her to cut out her pattern. (If desired, you might photograph each child’s clown act; then attach the photo to the back of her cut-out.) Encourage each child to share her results with her family to show how she measures up as a clown!
What's Under the Big Top?

Help your kindergartners improve their beginning-sounds skills as they explore what’s under the big top. Draw a simple circus tent, as shown, on a large sheet of red construction paper. Then cut out simple circus pictures from coloring books or magazines. Glue each cutout onto the left side of a sentence strip. Then, substituting a blank for the first letter of each word, label each strip. For self-checking purposes, write the missing letter on the back of each strip. Laminate the strips and the tent picture for durability; then staple the top edge of the tent picture to a large sheet of tagboard. Place the strips under the big top; then put the big top in a center with a wipe-off marker. To use, the child lifts the big top to remove a word strip. He fills in the missing letter and then checks his work. After he completes the activity, he wipes off the strips, and then places them under the big top for the next child.

Animal Cracker Circus

Students are bound to go crackers over this sorting activity. In advance, purchase a large box of animal crackers. Program each of several large index cards with the first letter of the name of an animal represented in the box. For younger students, glue the animal crackers whose names begin with that letter onto the card and write the animal name below each one. Place the cards, animal crackers, and napkins in a center. Ask each visitor to count out ten crackers onto a napkin. Have her sort the crackers by matching either the animal-name beginning sounds or the actual animal crackers. Then invite her to munch those yummy crackers for a circus snack!

Get Your Peanuts Here!

Shell out opportunities to strengthen estimating skills with a bag of peanuts. To prepare, color red stripes on a white lunch bag so that it resembles a circus peanut bag. Use pinking shears to cut the bag so that it is only about five inches tall. Seat students in a circle; then give each child a handful of unshelled peanuts. Ask each child to estimate how many peanuts it will take to fill the bag. Write each child’s estimate beside her name on a sheet of chart paper. Then pass the bag around the circle. Ask the class to count together as each child drops one peanut into the bag. Continue until the bag is full. Record the final number on the chart paper; then have youngsters compare their estimates to the actual number.
Community Helpers Count

Encourage youngsters to combine counting and social studies with these booklets. To begin, duplicate page 59 for each child. Help youngsters identify the workers shown on the pages. Then have each child count the community helpers on each page and write the corresponding number on the provided line. (You might supply number stamps for younger children to use.) Then ask the child to color and cut out each page. Help her sequence her pictures behind her cover page, then staple her booklet together. Invite each child to read her book to several adults and classmates before she takes it home to share with her family.

A Delivery of ABCs and 123s

Send some letter- and number-matching skills your students’ way with this post office center. To prepare, purchase a cardboard shoe organizer to serve as a set of mailboxes. (Or ask a grocer to donate boxes with cardboard dividers.) Label each compartment with a different child’s name and a number. Label a variety of envelopes with corresponding student names and mailbox numbers. Put the envelopes in a tote bag. Then invite each of your little letter carriers, in turn, to deliver each labeled envelope to the appropriate mailbox. To extend the activity, invite each child to write a letter to a classmate. Then help her copy the classmate’s name and mailbox number onto an envelope. Have the child seal the letter in the envelope, then put it in the bag for a future delivery.
Community Helpers in Song

Strengthen language skills while singing the praises of our community helpers. To prepare, write “firefighter” and “police officer” on separate sentence strips. Challenge older youngsters to use their knowledge of beginning sounds to figure out these words. Then teach your class this song about these two important community helpers. Insert the name of your city in the blank. Then, while singing, hold up the sentence strip corresponding to the named community helper. Afterward, encourage students to create new verses about other community helpers.

(sung to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”)

[Phoenix] has firefighters,
Firefighters, firefighters.
[Phoenix] has firefighters
To put the fires out.

[Phoenix] has police officers,
Police officers, police officers.
[Phoenix] has police officers
To keep our city safe.
Big Creatures, Big Words
Building vocabulary will be a huge success when you describe these larger-than-life reptiles. Begin by writing “Dinosaurs were big” on a sheet of chart paper. Read the sentence to the class; then invite a volunteer to point to the word big. Together, brainstorm other words that describe the massive size of most dinosaurs, such as large, huge, humongous, and gigantic. Label a separate sticky note with each response; then stack the notes over the word big. Ask the class to read the sentence aloud using the word on the top sticky note. Then remove the note and read the sentence again with the next word. When all the notes are removed, reread the original sentence.

To extend this activity for older students, invite each child to copy the sentence onto a sheet of chart paper, substituting her favorite adjective for the word big. Then have her illustrate her sentence.

D is for Dinosaur
Watch confusion over the letters b and d become extinct with this helpful hint. In advance, randomly program each of a class supply of notecards with either a b or a d. Mark the top of each card with a dot. Write a large d on chart paper.

Say the word dinosaur. Ask youngsters to identify the letter and sound at the beginning of the word. Then show them the letter on the chart paper. Ask youngsters to imagine that the rounded part of the d is a dinosaur’s tummy. Explain that since big ol’ dinosaurs are always hungry, their tummies are always the first things you see (as you read from left to right). Then transform the letter into a dinosaur as shown. Distribute the index cards, instructing each child to hold her card so that the dot is at the top. Ask her to decide whether she holds a b or d. Remind her that if it’s the letter d, as in dinosaur, the tummy comes first. To confirm her answer, have each child compare her card to the d on the chart.
**Sizing Up Dinosaurs**

This dinosaur activity will make a big difference in youngsters’ size-comparison skills. Ask youngsters to bring their labeled toy dinosaurs from home to help create a collection of dinosaurs in many sizes. Select three dinosaurs of different sizes and show youngsters how to sequence them by size. Describe the dinosaurs as big, bigger, and biggest. Then name each size again, this time having a student volunteer point to the appropriate dinosaur. Return the dinosaurs to the collection; then select three more dinosaurs and ask a student pair to order and name the dinosaurs by size. Continue in this manner until each child has a turn to help sequence a set of dinosaurs. Then, for a “dino-mite” conclusion, show your class pictures of *Brachiosaurus*, the biggest dinosaur, and *Compsognathus*, the smallest dinosaur. Tell students that the largest creature was as long as two school buses while the smallest was only slightly bigger than a chicken!

**Hatching Dinos**

Your little paleontologists will practice one-to-one correspondence as they hatch these dinosaur eggs. Place a small dinosaur toy or sticker inside each of ten plastic eggs. Explain to your class that like snakes, toads, and chickens, dinosaurs hatched from eggs. Show students the eggs. Ask them to count the eggs and decide how many dinosaurs will hatch from the egg set. Invite student volunteers to open the dinosaur eggs and chorally count the dinosaurs. Did youngsters guess the correct number?

To vary the activity, set out a desired number of dinosaurs from one to ten and then have your little ones put each dinosaur into an egg. Or to reinforce colors, separate the egg halves; then ask youngsters to match the halves and tuck a dinosaur into each egg. The “egg-citing” variations of this activity are endless!

**“Sort-a-saurus”**

All sorts of fun and learning will happen when youngsters categorize dinosaur-shaped pasta. To prepare, put a desired amount of dinosaur pasta shapes into a re-sealable plastic bag. Add one-half cup of rubbing alcohol and a few drops of food coloring; then shake the bag until the pasta is the desired color. Prepare three bags of different pasta colors in this manner. Then spread all the pasta out on paper towels to dry. To use, give each child a cup of ten or more pasta dinosaurs in assorted colors. First ask him to sort the dinosaurs by color. Then continue the fun by having him sort the pasta by dinosaur type or by different dinosaur characteristics, such as leg count.
Favorite Good Guys and Gals
Count on the good guys for this graphing activity! Select three fairy tales that feature a positive hero or heroine, such as Cinderella, the prince in *Sleeping Beauty*, and the third pig in *The Three Little Pigs*. Title a sheet of chart paper “Our Favorite Good Guys and Gals.” Divide the paper into three columns; then draw and label one of the three characters you’ve chosen at the base of each column. After reading the three stories, discuss each chosen character’s traits and why he or she was good. Next ask each child to decide which of the three characters is his favorite; then give him a sticky dot to place in the corresponding column. When the graph is complete, have the class count the dots to discover which good guy (or gal) is the class favorite.

A Fine Vine
Use Jack’s beanstalk to cultivate counting skills. To begin, color and cut out a tagboard copy of climbing Jack on page 60. Also cut a long strip of green poster board. Draw a simple vine on the strip. Laminate the vine and boy cutouts for durability. Punch a hole near the top and bottom of the vine. Cut a length of green yarn twice as long as the vine. Thread the yarn through the holes; then tape the yarn ends together to create a movable loop. Tape Jack to the yarn loop at the bottom of the vine. Then, starting at the bottom, use a wipe-off marker to write the numerals 1 through 10 at evenly spaced intervals up the vine. (For students with more advanced counting skills, write the numerals 1 through 20.)

To use, pull the yarn loop (from the back of the vine) to make Jack climb the beanstalk. Invite youngsters to count along as Jack passes each numeral. Then pull the yarn in the opposite direction to make Jack climb back down. Have students count backward as Jack makes his way to the bottom. See how Jack’s fine vine makes a fine counting line!
Simmering Stone Soup

After reading your favorite version of Stone Soup, cook up some counting and letter-identification skills with this recipe. To prepare, draw a chart as shown. Put the chart, the ingredients, measuring spoons, and a class supply of plastic bowls and spoons in your cooking center. Invite each child in a small group to follow the chart, counting out vegetables into his own bowl. Have him measure a teaspoon of alphabet pasta into his own bowl. Challenge him to name some of the pasta letters in his mixture.

When all the groups have prepared their ingredients, gather the class to reenact the story and make your own stone soup. First put the “stone” into a large pot. Ask each child if he has something to contribute; then invite him to add his pasta-vegetable mix to the pot. Finally, add the vegetable juice and enough water to cover the vegetables. Cook the soup until the vegetables are heated through. Enjoy the tasty results!

Stone Soup
1 stone (chicken bouillon cube) 10 frozen corn kernels (per child)
3 canned carrot slices (per child) 1 teaspoon alphabet pasta (per child)
7 frozen peas (per child) large can of vegetable juice

Tongue-Twistin’ Tale Titles

Tickle youngsters’ funny bones with this laughable language activity. To begin, write the title of a familiar fairy tale on a sheet of chart paper. Read the title to the class; then cover the first letter (or blend) in each key word with a small sticky note. Ask a child to name a consonant. Write the uppercase version of that letter on each sticky note. Then challenge youngsters to read the new fairy-tale title. For example, “Little Red Riding Hood” might be retitled “Bittle Bed Biding Bood” or “Hansel and Gretel” might become “Mansel and Metel.” These ticklish, tongue-twistin’ titles will create a flurry of fairy-tale fun!

Run, Gingerbread Man!

Let this gingerbread man help youngsters run away with valuable left-to-right reading skills. To make a pointer, trace a gingerbread-man cookie cutter onto a sheet of brown craft foam. Cut out the shape; then add features to the cutout using craft items, such as sequins and rickrack ribbon. Tape the foam cutout to a ruler. Then write the following on chart paper: “Run, run, run as fast as you can. You can’t catch me. I’m the Gingerbread Man.” (Or copy the character’s exact words from your favorite version of the classic fairy tale.) Once students are familiar with the story, read the chart to your class. As you read, show youngsters how to “run” the gingerbread-man pointer under the words. Then retell the story. Each time you reach the gingerbread man’s speaking part, have a volunteer lead the class in reciting the part as he runs the pointer under the words on the chart.
Popcorn Alphabet
Pop into fall with this paper popcorn string that provides practice with alphabet sequencing. In advance, cut 26 popcorn shapes from white construction paper; then label each one with a different letter of the alphabet. Invite youngsters to lay the popcorn pieces in a row on a table or on the floor, in alphabetical order. Depending on your youngsters’ skill level, have them use your classroom alphabet display for help.

Pennies at the Patch
Provide practice in counting money by setting up a pumpkin patch in your dramatic-play area. To prepare, collect an assortment of small or miniature pumpkins and gourds. Also gather several baskets, in varying sizes. Attach a card labeled with a money amount from 1¢ to 10¢ to each basket (smaller amounts on the smaller baskets). Put 20 pennies in each of several zippered sandwich bags to serve as money purses. Place the pumpkins, the labeled baskets, and the purses in a center along with a toy cash register.

At this center, one child plays the farmer selling her produce. The other students are shoppers. A shopper chooses a basket, fills it with the pumpkins of his choice, and then pays the farmer the number of pennies indicated on the basket. After all the shoppers have picked and paid, have them replace the pumpkins for the next group of pickers. Then have them help the farmer count out and put 20 pennies back into each purse.
Cash Crop

Cash in on numeral recognition skills by using grocery store ads. For each child in a small group, cut out a fall food and its price from a grocery store advertisement. Glue each ad onto tagboard. Give each child a food card; then ask him to identify the food pictured. Next call out a number from 0 to 9. Have each youngster search his card for the number called. (It might be part of a larger number, such as the 9 in 59.) If he finds the number on his card, he raises his hand and then shows you the number. Continue calling different numbers until all the numbers have been named. Then direct each youngster to switch cards with a classmate before playing another round.

Nuts About Numbers

Set up this nutty center to reinforce numerals and sets. Provide index cards labeled with the numerals 1 to 10 (or other numbers appropriate for your students’ ages) and a basket full of unshelled nuts. Each child at this center chooses a numeral card, then counts out a corresponding number of nuts. When he’s counted nuts to match each numeral card, check his work and reward his effort by stamping his hand with a squirrel stamp or drawing a simple squirrel on his hand (as shown).

I’m thinking of a food that begins with C.

Harvesting the ABCs

This alphabetical harvest of fruits and vegetables will yield a large crop of letter-sound associations. Collect a variety of real or plastic fruits and vegetables to represent as many beginning sounds as possible. Display the foods in a basket. Hold up a few of the foods—one at a time—and help youngsters identify the beginning letter for each of your examples. Then play this guessing game with youngsters. To begin, say, “I’m thinking of a food that begins with [letter].” Ask children to guess the food name. If necessary, give additional clues about the food’s color, taste, or other characteristics to help students answer correctly. Invite the child with the correct guess to remove that food from the basket. Then, in the same manner, provide clues about another food in the basket. Keep going until your little ones have harvested a crop of letter-sound practice!
Parade of Homes

There’s much to learn when you address the different types of homes in which families live. Discuss with youngsters the many different types of homes, such as houses, mobile homes, and apartments. Then encourage each child to draw a picture of his home. (Or have younger children bring in photos of their homes.) Mount each child’s drawing on a piece of tagboard; then write his address under his drawing. Then label a separate envelope with each child’s address. Place the drawings and envelopes in a center. To use, a student pair spreads the drawings out on a table. Each partner then matches an envelope to the appropriate address. The pair continues until all the matches have been made. Then each child finds his drawing and recites his address to his partner.

Home Is Where the Hearts Are

Get to the heart of the matter by teaching little ones that families come in many different shapes and sizes. To begin, cut out a simple construction paper house for each child. Then cut out an ample supply of large and small hearts from construction paper. Have each child label a small heart for each child in her family and a large heart for each adult. Have her glue the hearts onto her house cutout. Then ask her to add features to each heart—such as a head, arms, and legs—to represent the corresponding family member. Collect the houses; then put them in a center. Invite visitors to sort the houses by the number of family members, the number of adults, or the number of children.
Family Footwork

Step into family fun with this home-school project. Send each child home with a few large sheets of construction paper in one color. (If possible, send a different color to each family.) Include a note explaining that the child will trace and cut out one foot (or shoe) outline of each family member. Ask that one member help the child label the cutouts with the appropriate person’s name. Back in class, have each youngster count the foot cutouts in his collection and then sequence the cutouts by size. Then divide your class into student pairs. Invite the partners to combine their cutouts and then sequence them by size. As they work together, encourage the students to determine if any of their family members have the same foot size. Which member has the largest foot? The smallest foot? Now that’s some fancy footwork!

Family Names

Family names are passed along from generation to generation. Recognize youngsters’ family names as you pass along some counting practice with this idea. To prepare, identify the child in your class with the longest last name. Count the letters in his last name; then write the numerals from 1 to that number along the bottom of your chalkboard to create a number graph. Then help each child write (or trace over) his last name on a sentence strip. Have him count the letters in his name; then have him tape his name strip above the corresponding numeral on the chalkboard. When the graph is complete, have the class count the names in each column and discuss the results.

Family Rap

“Rap” your youngsters in family pride with this alphabet chant. After your little ones learn the chant, have half the class chant the letters while the other half recites the lines. Then switch parts and wrap up this activity with another go-round.

A - B - CDE
In a family is the place for me!
F - G - HIJ
Families work and families play.
K - L - MNO
My family’s love helps me grow.
P - Q - RST
Family makes me so happy.
U - V - WXY
Family makes me smile with pride.
Z - Z - ZZZ
I sure love my family!
My Teacher Had a Farm

On this farm, you’ll hear letter sounds instead of animal sounds! Copy this adapted version of “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” onto chart paper, inserting your name and gender where indicated. Then laminate the chart. Fill in the blank for the animal name with any farm animal; then fill in the remaining blanks with the beginning consonant sound for that animal name. Sing the song with youngsters, emphasizing the beginning consonant sound. Then erase the animal name and letters, replace them with another set, and sing the song again.

As a variation for kindergartners, fill in animal names that have short vowel sounds, such as cat, hen, pig, dog, or duck. Write the corresponding vowels on each of the remaining lines. Little ones will sing this tune until the cows come home!

[Teacher’s name] had a farm.
A-B-C-D-E.
And on [her] farm [she] had a [name of animal].
A-B-C-D-E.
With a [__, __] here,
And a [__, __] there,
Here a [__], there a [__], everywhere a [__, __].
[Teacher’s name] had a farm.
A-B-C-D-E.

Mrs. Timmons had a farm.
A-B-C-D-E.
And on her farm she had a pig.
A-B-C-D-E.
With a p, p here,
And a p, p there,
Here a p, there a p,
everywhere a p, p.
Mrs. Timmons had a farm.
A-B-C-D-E.

Letters Down on the Farm

Here’s a “moo-velous” way for youngsters to practice letter matching and letter sounds. Place some plastic farm animals in a center. Write the name of each animal on a separate sentence strip; then laminate the strips for durability. Put the word strips, magnetic letters, and a magnetic board in the center. To use, a child matches an animal to its corresponding word strip. (Encourage him to use his knowledge of beginning sounds to make each match.) He places the strip on the magnetic board. Then he matches the magnetic letters to the letters on the strip to spell the animal’s name.

As a variation for older students, omit the final consonant on each sentence strip label. Challenge children to find the magnetic letter that completes each animal name.
Sheep in All Sizes

Your youngsters will flock to create these adorable sheep. To prepare, draw and label three simple sheep (as shown) on a sheet of copy paper. Place cotton balls on each circle to determine the number needed to completely cover it. Then write the corresponding number inside each circle. Duplicate a class supply of the drawing on construction paper. Give each child a copy, a supply of cotton balls, and glue. Ask each youngster to cover each sheep body with the number of cotton balls indicated. Have her re-check her work before gluing the cotton balls in place and adding details to the picture with crayons.

Scrambled Eggs

Your little ones are sure to get “egg-cited” about this sequencing activity! Gather a dozen small plastic eggs. Use a permanent marker to label each egg with a different numeral from 1 to 12. Next, cut the bottom half of an egg carton into three-cup sections. Then divide the eggs into sets of three consecutive numerals. For example, the eggs labeled with 1, 2, and 3 will make one set, while another set will contain the eggs labeled 4, 5, and 6. Randomly place the eggs in each set into a separate egg carton section. To use, a child sequences each set of eggs in numerical order.

To further challenge youngsters, stamp a set of chicks onto a small construction paper egg to correspond to the numeral on each plastic egg. Have the child count the chicks on each paper egg and then insert it into the appropriate plastic egg. After you’ve checked for accuracy, scramble the eggs again for the next child.

“Weigh-ing” for Chicks

Balance out your farm unit with an activity that’s sure to hatch a lot of knowledge. To prepare, transform eight yellow pom-poms into chicks by gluing a pair of wiggle eyes and an orange felt beak onto each one. Divide the chicks into pairs; then use hot glue to attach one penny to the bottom of each chick in the first pair. Stack and glue two pennies to each chick in the second pair, three pennies to each chick in the third pair, and four pennies to each chick in the last pair. Place each chick in its own plastic egg, place the eggs in an empty egg carton, and place the egg carton and a balance scale in a center.

At this center, a child weights the eggs on the balance scale, trying to find the pairs with equal weights. To check for accuracy, she can open the eggs and count the pennies on each chick.
Mystery Letters

Get in touch with this sensory approach to letter identification! To prepare, obtain a set of alphabet flash cards. Divide the class into pairs; then have the partners sit pretzel-style, one behind the other. (Make sure all the children are facing you.) Designate the front partner in each pair as the guesser and the back one as the writer. Ask the guessers to lower their heads and cover their eyes while you show the writers a letter card. Lower the card; then invite the guessers to open their eyes. Have each writer use her finger to write the letter from the card on the guesser’s back. Then have the guesser whisper to the writer the letter she felt. Encourage the pair to repeat this procedure until the guesser identifies the mystery letter. When all the guessers have determined the letter, have the partners switch roles and repeat the game using a different letter card.

Spanish Makes Sense to Me

Introduce some Spanish into your five-senses unit to delight and tickle the tongues of your little ones. To begin, write the sentences below on chart paper. Write each Spanish word (shown in parentheses) on a separate sentence strip; then trim each strip so that it fits over the corresponding English word in the chart-paper sentence. For several days, read the sentences in English with your class until they become familiar to youngsters. Then tape each Spanish word over its corresponding English word. Read the sentences with the class again, this time with the Spanish substitutions. Continue to read the sentences together over time. Before long these Spanish words will become natural in your youngsters’ vocabulary.

I see with my eyes.  (ojos)
I hear with my ears.  (orejas)
I smell with my nose.  (nariz)
I touch with my hands.  (manos)
I taste with my tongue.  (lengua)
Team Senses

Do your little ones know that their five senses work together as one team? To demonstrate, give each child an apple slice. Have students eat their apples. Then encourage them to discuss which of their senses helped them to enjoy their apples. Did they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel their apples during this experience? Once youngsters understand that their senses work as a team, complete a chart like the one shown. Include in the first column activities, such as walking on the beach or eating a meal. Then discuss which senses work together as a person performs each activity. Have a volunteer mark each appropriate column on the chart. After completing the chart, review the class findings with students. Which activities work all of our senses at the same time? Which of the five senses is used the most in the listed activities? The least? Look! Listen! Youngsters are working as a team to learn about their teamed-up senses!

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<th>Mouth</th>
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<tr>
<td>taking a bath</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Senses Journals

If your older students use daily journals, try this activity to explore the five senses. Each day write “see,” “taste,” “hear,” “smell,” or “feel” on the chalkboard. Draw a simple body part to symbolize the sense for the day, such as an eye for sight or a nose for smell. Read the word together; then have students draw pictures of things to represent that sense, such as a flower for smell or a radio for hearing. Ask the child to write/dictate a related statement about his illustration on his journal page.

Adapt this activity for younger children by making five-senses books. To make one, staple five sheets of construction paper together. On each page write “Things I can ___.” Complete each sentence with a drawing of a body part representing one of the five senses. Help each child cut out magazine pictures related to the sense for the day. Have him glue the cutouts onto the corresponding page; then invite him to share his work with the class.

Sorting Senses

Use this classification activity to build vocabulary skills around the five senses. To prepare, label each of five envelopes with a different sense; then draw a picture symbol for each one. On each of several notecards, write a descriptive word related to one of the senses, such as sweet (taste or smell), hot (touch), loud (sound), or bright (sight).

During group time, lay the envelopes in front of your youngsters. Read the word on a notecard; then ask students to name something that fits the descriptive word. For example, they might respond with “candy” when you read the word sweet. Next have a volunteer identify the sense related to the word. (There may be more than one correct answer for some words. Invite youngsters to explain their thinking.) Have him place the card in the corresponding envelope. Continue in this manner until each card is in a “sense-ible” envelope.
Count on Friends

Here’s a picture-perfect way to teach youngsters that they can count on friends. With a new roll of film in your camera, take a picture of a student volunteer; then invite her to choose a friend to include in a second photo. After snapping the second picture, ask the second child to invite a friend to join the group. Take a picture of the trio; then have the third child bring another friend to the group. Continue in this manner, adding a friend to the existing group for each new photo, until every child is pictured in the last photo. (Make sure all the children are clearly visible in every photo.) Mount each picture onto a tagboard card; then laminate the cards, if desired. Draw a number line on a long strip of bulletin board paper, ending with the total number of children in your class. Then randomly distribute the pictures to students. Have each child count the friends in his picture; then have him tape his photo onto the number line. You can count on friends!

Just Call on Me

A friend is just a phone call away. And when your little ones dial their friends at this center, they will also be calling on their number skills! To begin, make a student telephone directory. Glue each child’s class photo onto a notecard; then write her name and telephone number on the card. Laminate each card for durability. Punch two holes at the top of each card and then bind the cards with two metal rings. Place a student desk, the directory, a play telephone, a notepad, and pencils in a center. A child at this center finds a friend’s card in the directory. He copies the phone number on the notepad. Then he dials his friend for a casual chat about this or that. Hello, friend!
A Rhyme for a Friend

Keep friends gigglin’ together with this rhymin’ good time that promotes phonemic awareness. Seat your little ones in a circle. Explain that you will say a silly chant about a friend in the class. Challenge youngsters to listen to the rhyming clue and then guess the name of the child. As you chant the second line, replace the beginning sound of the child’s name with another sound. Then pause in the next-to-last line to prompt students to fill in the correct name. Repeat the chant several times using different students’ names. Then invite each child, in turn, to recite this rollicking rhyme.

I have a friend
Whose name rhymes with [Bim].
Hey la-di, la-di, la!
I have a friend.
My friend’s name is [Jim].
Hey la-di, la-di, la!

A Snack to Share

Caring means sharing among friends. So share this snack as a surefire way to bring friends together. In advance, gather plastic resealable bags and a few different kinds of snack foods, such as Goldfish® crackers, raisins, Cheerios® cereal, and pretzels. Pour each snack into a separate bowl. Divide the class into pairs; then give each pair a plastic bag. Invite each pair of friends to cooperatively count ten of each snack item into its bag. Once the counting is complete, have the pair distribute the snack items evenly between the partners. Then, as youngsters snack together, share some friendly remarks about their cooperative spirits.

My Friend’s Name

In a child’s world, his name and his friends’ names are of utmost importance. Use youngsters’ natural interest in names and these nifty name cards to reinforce name and letter skills. To prepare, glue a small photograph of each child onto a separate notecard; then label the card with the child’s name (in capital or lowercase letters, to match your magnetic letters). Laminate the cards for durability. Then back each card with a piece of magnetic tape. Place the cards, a magnetboard, and a set of magnetic letters in a center. To use, a child places a name card on the board. Then he uses the letters to spell the name on the card.

As an added challenge, when you visit this center, ask the child to look away as you remove a magnetic letter from the name he’s spelled or add a letter to it. Then challenge the child to find the spelling change in his friend’s name.
**Seed Survival**

Use this countdown rhyme to teach youngsters that only a small fraction of seeds actually get planted well enough to survive and thrive. As you recite the rhyme, ask students to hold up the corresponding number of fingers.

Five little seeds, blowing in the breeze,
Looking for a place to grow in peace.
One lands on ice. Too cold! He’ll freeze.
Now four little seeds are blowing in the breeze.

Four little seeds, blowing in the breeze,
Looking for a place to grow in peace.
One lands on rock. No soil, you see.
Now three little seeds are blowing in the breeze.

Three little seeds, blowing in the breeze,
Looking for a place to grow in peace.
One lands in water. “Too wet!” says he.
Now two little seeds are blowing in the breeze.

Two little seeds, blowing in the breeze,
Looking for a place to grow in peace.
One lands in shade. But it’s sun he needs.
Now one little seed is blowing in the breeze.

One little seed, blowing in the breeze,
Looking for a place to grow in peace.
He lands in soil that fits perfectly.
Now he’ll grow into a healthy tree!

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**Garden Bingo**

Plant the seeds for stronger number skills with a game of Garden Bingo. To prepare, make several construction paper copies of the bingo card on page 61. Cut out and laminate each card. Then program each card with a different random arrangement of the numerals 1–9. Then program nine index cards each with a numeral from 1 to 9 to serve as caller cards. To play, give each player a bingo card and nine sunflower seeds. Pick a caller card and call out the number. Each player covers that numeral with a seed. When a player covers three numerals in a row, he calls out “Seeds-O!” Youngsters will give this game two green thumbs up!
Garden Soup

Warm up youngsters’ letter skills with today’s special—garden-style alphabet soup. In advance, make die-cut letters from construction paper. Then distribute the letters to students. Help each child name a fruit or vegetable beginning with her letter. Have her illustrate that food on a notecard. Then label the back of her card with the food name. To make soup, recite the rhyme below, inviting each child to toss her letter and food card into a pot. Stir the soup to mix up the letters and cards. Then randomly pass a serving of soup—one letter and one food card—to each child. Together, sequence the letters; then have each child match her food card to the corresponding letter.

Pick and wash. Slice and toss. Into the pot they go. Add your special ingredients. Now simmer it nice and slow!

Shapely Sprouts

Watch enthusiasm bloom as these flowers take shape right before youngsters’ eyes. In advance, cut a quantity of construction paper shapes to represent different parts of a plant. You might cut small ovals for seeds, long rectangles for stems, hearts for leaves, circles for flower centers, and ovals for flower petals. Put the shapes in a center. Then send each child to the center to create a flower by gluing the shapes onto construction paper. During group time, invite the child to show his flower to the class. Ask him to name each shape represented in his flower. Then display the pictures on a bulletin board titled “Shapely Sprouts.”

Grow a Rainbow

Invite your little sprouts to grow a garden of rainbow colors. In advance, make several tulip-shaped tagboard tracers. Invite each child to trace a tulip onto construction paper. Have her cut out the flower and glue it onto a craft stick stem. Then help her insert the flower into an inverted Styrofoam® cup to create a tulip planter. Collect all the planters; then invite each child, in turn, to sort and pattern the tulip colors as she desires.
Health & Safety

Chicken Pox Spots

Are youngsters curious about the common childhood disease known as chicken pox? If so, scratch the surface of this topic with these spot-counting pictures. To begin, invite each child who has had this itchy illness to share his experience with the class. Ask him to tell about some things that made him feel better when he was sick, such as taking an oatmeal bath, wearing mittens to prevent him from scratching his scabs, or getting a hug from Mom. Conclude your discussion by telling youngsters that chicken pox is caused by a virus—not chickens! One requires special care and time to recover from this illness. Then have each child draw a self-portrait. Write a numeral on each picture; then laminate it. Put the pictures and a red wipe-off marker in a center. Invite each center visitor to select a classmate’s portrait. Then have him draw the number of chicken pox spots on the portrait to correspond to the numeral on the page. Youngsters are sure to giggle their way through this silly game about an illness with a silly name.

Play It Safe

Use this street-smart safety rhyme to reinforce the concept of left and right. To help children distinguish between their left and right sides, teach them this simple trick. Have each child hold the back of his left hand in front of him as shown. Point out that his left hand makes an L, the letter at the beginning of the word left. Then say the rhyme. Have youngsters perform the actions. As needed, encourage them to use the special trick as a reminder of their left sides. Now that’s the right way to teach about left and right!

Left, right, left.
I’m walking with my feet.
Left, right, left.

I’m stopping at the street.
Left, right, left.
I’ll look before I go.
Left, right, left.
Just look at what I know.

Walk left, right, left.

Walk left, right, left; then stop.

Turn head left, right, left.

Walk left, right, left.

Chicken Pox Spots

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Staying fit is as easy as ABC when your exercise regime includes this alphabetical workout. To warm up, ask a volunteer to lead the class in a simple exercise, such as toe touches, side bends, or running in place. Encourage youngsters to keep doing the named exercise until they’ve rhythmically recited the entire alphabet. Then ask another volunteer to lead the group in a new exercise and a second recitation of the ABCs.

For some “alpha-cises” with a creative twist, divide the class into groups of three or four students. Call out a letter of the alphabet; then encourage youngsters to form that letter with their bodies, either individually or as a group. After a round of “alpha-cises,” youngsters will feel more healthy in mind and body!

Happy Hand Washing

Teach your little ones to be germ busters with this sequencing activity. In advance photograph a different child performing each of several hand-washing steps. For example, you might picture one child turning on the water, another lathering her hands, a third child rinsing her hands, a fourth child turning off the water, a fifth child drying her hands, and a sixth child throwing a paper towel in the trash can. Laminate the photos for durability. During group time, discuss each photograph in sequence; then place the pictures in a center. Encourage students to sequence the photos as they explain the steps to proper hand washing. Later, display the sequenced pictures near your classroom sink to remind youngsters of the how-tos of hand washing.

Pass the Tissue, Please

Share this poem to reinforce the importance of using tissues to prevent the spread of germs. To prepare, write the poem on chart paper; then recite it several times with your class. Once youngsters are familiar with the poem, write each line on a separate sentence strip. Give each of five children a strip. Encourage them to sequence the strips as they recite the poem. Repeat this procedure until each child has had a turn. Then, to increase the challenge, cut apart the words on each sentence strip. Have youngsters take turns sequencing the words in each line of the poem. Be sure to display the chart as a reference.

Ahh-ahh! There’s a tickle in my nose.
Ahh-ahh! Now what do you suppose?
Ahh-ahh! I think I’m going to sneeze.
Ahh-ahh! I need a tissue, please.
Ahh-ahh... Ahh-choo!

“Alpha-cises”
Turn Over a New Leaf

Shape recognition and fun are a perfect match in this game. To prepare, cut 12 identical leaves from colored tagboard. Divide the leaves into pairs; then program each pair with one of the following shapes: circle, square, triangle, rectangle, diamond, or oval. Laminate the leaves for durability; then put them in a center and invite student pairs to play this memory game. To play, arrange the leaves facedown on a table. The first player turns over two leaves. She identifies the shapes on the leaves. If the shapes match, she keeps the pair. If the shapes do not match, she returns them to the play table. Then the next player takes her turn. The game continues until all the pairs are found.

Fall Leaf Countdown

Use this countdown chant to reinforce number skills. In advance, collect (or cut from construction paper) five leaves each for half the students in your class. Then divide your class into student pairs. Designate one child in each pair to be a tree and the other child to be the wind. Give each tree five leaves; then have the trees spread out in an open area of the room. Ask each tree to hold the leaves in his hands and then position his arms to resemble branches. Recite the chant. Each time you reach the word “Whoosh!” in the rhyme, have the wind puff and pull a leaf from the tree branch. After completing the chant, invite the partners to switch roles for another round of wind-blowing, leaf-falling excitement.

Five little fall leaves hanging on a tree,
Teasing the wind, “You can’t catch me!”
Along comes the wind, strong as can be.
Whoosh!
One little leaf falls from the tree.

Four little fall leaves…
Three little fall leaves…
Two little fall leaves…
One little fall leaf…

No little fall leaves hanging on a tree.
It sure looks like wintertime to me!
Leaf Pile

Pile up some estimation skills with this activity. In advance, gather a supply of leaves in a variety of colors and sizes. (Or cut out a collection of construction paper leaves.) Pile a small amount of the leaves onto a paper plate. Show youngsters the leaf pile; then ask them to estimate the number of leaves on the plate. Have each child write his estimate on a sticky note labeled with his name. Then have him attach his sticky note to the chalkboard. Ask younger students to match the notes that have the same numerals. Have older students arrange the notes in numerical order. Then count the leaves in the pile. Did any of the students guess the correct number? Which students estimated more leaves? Fewer leaves? After comparing the results, create a new pile of leaves on the plate; then jump in for more estimating fun!

Loose Leaf Toss

Positional words are “une-leaf-ably” easy to learn with this hands-on activity. In advance, cut out two construction paper leaves for each child. Use rope or yarn to make a circle in an open area of your room. Seat your class around the circle; then distribute the leaves evenly among the children. On a signal, have the children toss their leaves into the air. Once the leaves settle, chorally count the leaves that landed in the circle. Then count the leaves that are out of the circle. Where did most of the leaves land? Ask each youngster to retrieve two leaves. Place a chair in the circle; then signal students to toss their leaves again. This time count the leaves on the chair, under the chair, in front of the chair, and behind the chair, as well as those outside the circle.

All Sorts of Fun

Bag those all-important observation skills with this leaf-sorting activity. To begin, select three leaf types that are indigenous to your area. For each child, collect (or cut from construction paper) at least one of each type. Gather three paper grocery bags; then glue a different leaf type on each bag. Label each bag with the corresponding tree name. Put the bags and leaves in a center. Invite small groups to sort the leaves into the bags.

If you have a variety of fallen leaves around your school’s campus, try this follow-up activity. Give each child a paper bag and a leaf from your classroom; then take your class outdoors. Challenge each child to gather leaves that resemble his own leaf.
Happy Birthday, New Year

Usher in the new year and number awareness with this counting activity. To prepare, display a calendar for the new year. After New Year’s Day, ask youngsters to tell you the age, in days, of the new year. Then count the days that have passed—from January 1 to the current date. How many children answered correctly? Write the numeral on a sticky note. Then post the note on a sentence strip programmed with “The year [2000] is _______ days old today.” In the following days, repeat the activity, replacing the old sticky note with the updated information. Happy birthday, New Year—you’re another day older!

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The year 2000 is _______ days old today.

Yesteryear and Yet to Be

To celebrate the new year, invite each of your kindergartners to reminisce over the old year and to anticipate the new. In advance, visually divide a sheet of paper and program it as shown. Duplicate a class quantity of the page. Then give each child a copy and help her fill in the blanks with events from the past year and the upcoming one. Help her sound out the words as necessary. Then invite her to illustrate the events. Have each child “read” her page to her classmates and show her illustrations.
Counting Confetti

Toss some number skills into this confetti-making activity. Collect scraps of colored paper; then write a numeral from 1 to 10 on each scrap. Place the scraps in a center along with hole punchers and box lids. To use, a child reads the numeral written on a paper scrap. Then he punches the corresponding number of holes in the paper, collecting the resulting confetti in a box lid. Have him write his name on the hole-punched scrap; then collect all the scraps and check them later to assess counting skills at a glance. Save the homemade confetti for “Send the Very Best (above).”

Send the Very Best

Youngsters will strengthen number and writing skills when they greet the new year with these special cards. To prepare, gather a business envelope for each child. Then fold a class supply of 8” x 9” white paper in half lengthwise to create cards. Write the numerals 1–10 in reverse order across the width of a sheet of chart paper; then write “Happy New Year!” on the other side. Display the numeral side of the chart. Distribute the cards and envelopes to your class. Have each child copy the numerals from the chart onto the front of his card. Then flip the chart over and have him copy the New Year’s greeting onto the inside of his card. Invite him to embellish his card with festive drawings, stamps, or stickers. Then have him tuck a generous pinch of confetti (from “Counting Confetti” below) inside the card. Help each child seal his greeting card inside his envelope; then have him take the card home to his family. Confetti will be flying high as youngsters share this New Year’s greeting with their loved ones!

Party Horn Patterning

Youngsters will be blowing their own horns with this activity that practices patterning skills and auditory memory. Provide each child with an inexpensive New Year’s party horn and take one for yourself. To begin, blow a pattern of long and short blasts on your horn; then ask youngsters to copy your pattern as they blow their own horns. Keep going with different patterns until your little ones get the hang of it. Then invite children to take turns blowing their own patterns for the class to imitate. It’s toot-toot-terrific!
Jack and Jill’s Opposites

Let Jack and Jill help your students fetch some knowledge of opposites. In advance, write each word from an opposite pair—such as happy/sad, loud/quiet, fast/slow, hot/cold, dry/wet, and up/down—on an index card, using a different color marker to write each pair. Back the cards with magnetic tape and display one word from each pair on your chalkboard or a magnet board. Then ask two children to play the parts of Jack and Jill. Give the pair a sand pail with one of the leftover cards inside. Have the pair skip along as the class sings this version of the traditional rhyme:

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To find a pair of opposites.
They found a card; it wasn’t hard.
Now help them find its opposite!

Have Jack and Jill pull the card from their pail and show it to the group. Read the word to the students or ask a student volunteer to sound out the word. Then invite the group to find the word’s opposite among the word cards on the board. Display the opposite pair together and use the ink color to check for accuracy. Then have a new Jack and Jill skip to the front of the group as you repeat the activity with a new pair of opposites.

Ps Porridge

Cook up this ABC version of porridge to strengthen students’ letter recognition skills. Bring to group time a large metal pot, a supply of notepaper, a set of magnetic letters, and a class supply of pencils. Give each child a pencil and a few sheets of paper. Then place the letter P on the outside of the pot. Have youngsters identify the letter and then write it on a sheet of paper. Invite each child to drop his paper into the pot as you recite this rhyme. Invite a student volunteer to stir the Ps porridge; then replace the magnetic P with another letter. Repeat the activity, this time using the name of the new letter in the chant.

[Ps] porridge hot,
[Ps] porridge cold,
[Ps] porridge in the pot
Nine days old.
Some like it hot,
Some like it cold,
Some like it in the pot
Nine days old.
Have You Any Wool?
Baa, baa, little sheep, have you any wool? Yes, sir!
And in this woolly activity, youngsters will count out how many bags full. To make bags of wool, collect several cotton ball colors. Stuff ten snack-sized resellable plastic bags with the first cotton ball color. Repeat for the other colors. Seal each bag; then put the bags in a basket. Color one copy of the sheep pattern on page 60 to match each cotton color. Cut out the sheep, laminate them, and attach each one to a craft stick to make sheep puppets.

Give each puppet to a different volunteer. Lead the class in chanting, “Baa, baa, [color] sheep, have you any wool?” Encourage the child with the corresponding sheep to answer “Yes, sir! Yes, sir! [Number] bags full,” inserting a number from one to ten in the blank. Then have him count out the corresponding bags of wool. Ask the class to count the bags together to check for accuracy; then have the child return the bags to the basket. Continue in this manner, giving each child a turn to be a sheep.

“Hide-and-Sheep”
Use this fun small-group game to reinforce positional words and following directions. Copy, cut out, and laminate a construction paper sheep pattern (page 60). Appoint one child in the group to be Little Bo Peep and another child to be a shepherd. Give the shepherd a sheep cutout; then whisper into her ear a hiding place for the sheep. While Little Bo Peep covers her eyes, have the shepherd hide the sheep in the named place. Then invite Bo Peep to open her eyes and chant, “I’m Little Bo Peep. I’ve lost my sheep and don’t know where to find it!” Have the shepherd answer Bo Peep with, “I’m a shepherd and this is what I’ve heard. Look [under a table].” Have the shepherd give a general clue regarding the location of the hidden sheep. Then encourage Little Bo Peep to search for the sheep until she finds it. Then play again with a new Bo Peep and shepherd until everyone has had a turn to both hide and find a sheep.

Mary’s Colorful Lambs
Recruit Mary’s help in teaching colors to your little lambs. Title a bulletin board “Mary Had a Little Lamb; Its Fleece Was…” Label individual sentence strips with a color phrase to complete the sentence. For example, you might write “white as snow” on one strip and “green as grass” on another. Prepare a strip for each desired color; then staple each one to a different section of the bulletin board. Duplicate a class supply of the sheep pattern on page 60 on construction paper. Then cut out all the sheep. Place the cutouts in a center along with cotton balls, spring-type clothespins, and a paint color for each color mentioned on the display. Invite each center visitor to attach a clothespin to a cotton ball to make a paintbrush. Then have him paint his sheep the color of his choice. When the paint dries, help each child staple his sheep near the corresponding sentence strip on the display.

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blue as the sky

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ABC Foods

Capitalize on youngsters’ abilities to recognize words in their environment by using this alphabet of familiar foods. In advance, ask parents to send in can labels or box fronts from nutritious foods. When you have at least one label for each letter, have the children help you prepare these alphabet cards. To begin, write each letter on a separate large sheet of construction paper. Spread the sheets out on the floor; then work as a group to sort through the labels to find those that begin with each letter. Glue the labels onto each sheet. Display the food alphabet in sequence on a clothesline. Or bind the sheets into a class book titled “ABC Foods.” Now that’s some nutritious food for thought!

A Fruity Rainbow

Make this colorful, tasty treat to teach youngsters about nutritious foods. To prepare, send home a note asking parents to send in an orange, a pint of strawberries or blueberries, green or purple grapes, a banana, or vanilla yogurt. Wash the fruit, peel it if necessary, and prepare it in bite-size pieces. Then put each food into a separate container. Ask your class to brainstorm a list of healthful foods for each color of the rainbow. Students might include foods such as apples, tomatoes, and strawberries for the color red, or grapes, lettuce, and cucumbers for green. Then invite each child to make this nutritious rainbow snack. To make one, spoon a yogurt “cloud” into a clear plastic cup. Create a rainbow by layering the different fruit colors. Top the rainbow with another yogurt “cloud.” This tasty treat will have youngsters following their taste buds somewhere over the rainbow!
Nutrition

37

Not in the Mood for Junk Food

Count on this call-and-response chant to help youngsters recognize foods that should be eaten only in moderation. To begin, write the chant on chart paper. As you recite each counting line, encourage youngsters to hold up the corresponding number of fingers. Then have them respond as indicated in italics.

Children, children, did you know
Junk food doesn’t help you grow?
So keep these different foods in mind,
And grab a fruit or veggie next time.

One…lollipop. Two…soda pop.
Three…french fries. Four…cream pies.
Five…milk shakes. Six…coffee cakes.
Seven…potato chips. Eight…spicy dips.
Nine…chocolate cake. Ten…STOMACHACHE!

We’re not in the mood for...junk food!
Colorful Sea Creatures

Strengthen color-word recognition and beginning sounds with the help of these underwater friends. Program each of six tagboard strips with “white whale,” “red lobster,” “gray dolphin,” “black seal,” “pink shrimp,” or “yellow sea horse.” Then duplicate the sea animal patterns on page 63 onto tagboard. Color each picture to correspond to its label on the strip; then cut the boxes apart. Copy the song shown onto chart paper; then display the song, phrases, and pictures during group time.

Tape a picture onto the blank in the first line of the song and the corresponding phrase onto the blank in the last line. As you sing the song to the tune of Raffi’s “Baby Beluga,” prompt students to name the animal in the first line and the color and animal in the last line. (You might encourage them to use initial sound clues, as well as the picture, to determine the color name.) Then change the prompts and sing the song again.

Baby ______ in the ocean blue,
How I wish I could swim with you,
In the kingdom of the deep blue sea,
With a little __________ next to me.

Sand Pail Estimation

Little ones will have buckets of fun when they make estimates with sand! To prepare, label a small sand pail “1” and a larger pail “2.” Then, for each pail, create a chart similar to the one shown. Place the pails and a measuring cup in your sand table. Ask each sand table visitor to write his name on both charts. Then have him estimate how many cups of sand are needed to fill each pail. (You might cover responses recorded by previous visitors.) Help the child record his estimates in the appropriate columns. Then instruct him to use the measuring cup to fill each pail. How many cups of sand were needed for the small pail? The large one? Have him write his findings on the chart. Then have the child compare his estimates to the actual numbers and to his classmates’ results.

Baby ______ in the ocean blue.
How I wish I could swim with you.
In the kingdom of the deep blue sea.
With a little red lobster next to me.
Ocean Waves

Your class will experience a wave of excitement over this fishy measurement activity. To prepare an ocean, use a permanent marker to draw waves of different lengths on a gallon-sized resealable plastic bag (as shown). Draw a fish outline at the end of each wave. Pour two cups of water into the bag; then add a few drops of blue food coloring. Slowly zip the bag, releasing all the air from it. Then seal the zipped edge with wide packing tape for extra security against leaks. Place the ocean bag in a center along with some Goldfish® tiny crackers and a wipe-off marker. To use, measure each wave with crackers. Count the crackers and record the corresponding numeral on the fish at the end of the wave. Count the crackers again for accuracy; then erase the numerals with a damp paper towel. After each child’s turn, invite her to snack on her fish crackers. It’s time to catch a wave!

What “Shell” We Do?

Shell out some simple math skills with this beach time activity. Pour a layer of sand into each of several gift box bottoms. Add ten small shells to each box; then gather a small group of students and give each child a box-lid beach. Keep one mini beach for yourself. Depending on your students’ ages and ability levels, try one of the following activities:

- Place your shells on the sand to form a shape. Have students copy the shape with their shells.
- Name a number and ask students to count out a corresponding number of shells.
- Arrange your shells into two sets. Ask youngsters to tell you if one set has more, fewer, or an equal number of shells. Then ask each child to arrange his shells into two sets for the group to compare.
- Tell simple math stories to your kindergartners, and have them use their shells to act them out. (“There were two shells on the beach. A wave washed up four more. How many are there altogether?”)

Gone Fishin’

Fishing for a way to get youngsters excited about learning letters? Then invite them on this fishing expedition! Cut a pair of fish from craft foam for each letter of the alphabet. Use a permanent marker to program pairs of fish with corresponding uppercase and lowercase letters. Put the fish in your water table along with fish or butterfly nets. Tape a short length of yarn—or fishing line—to the table for each fish pair. Tie a clothespin to the loose end of each line. Then invite each water table visitor to fish for pairs of matching fish with a net. Have him clip each pair to the end of a fishing line to display the catch of the day. It’s a letter-perfect day for fishing!
**A Shapely Rainbow**

Chase away rainy day blues with this color and shape review. To begin, draw a large outline of a rainbow on white bulletin board paper. Pencil in the appropriate color words from top to bottom—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple. Make several tagboard tracers for each of six shapes, such as circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, ovals, and hearts. Then gather construction paper in the rainbow colors. Divide your class into six groups. Assign each group a different color and shape. Ask each group member to trace her assigned shape several times onto the appropriate paper color. Have her cut out each shape and then glue it onto the corresponding section of the rainbow. Wow! A colorful rainbow takes shape!

**Counting on Rain**

Reinforce number skills right down to the last drop of this rain activity. To prepare, put eyedroppers, blue-tinted water, permanent markers, white construction paper, and a set of magnetic numerals in your discovery center. To practice making raindrops, invite each child to use an eyedropper to squeeze blue water droplets onto a sheet of paper. Encourage him to drop the rain from various heights above his paper to create raindrops of different sizes. Then help him fold another sheet of paper twice to create four equal sections. Have him unfold his paper; then ask him to copy a different numeral on each section, using the magnetic numerals as references. Direct the child to squeeze the corresponding number of raindrops onto each section.

One raindrop, two raindrops,…
Brainstorm Rainstorm

With this rhyming “brainstorm,” it’ll be raining cats and dogs...and bats and hogs...and hats and logs! Cut out a quantity of raindrops from light blue construction paper. Program each of several raindrops with a word family (rime), such as at, ed, ig, op, or ug. Open a large umbrella; then tape one programmed raindrop onto the umbrella. Help youngsters pronounce the word ending. Then challenge them to brainstorm words with the same ending. Label a separate raindrop with each student response; then tape it to the umbrella. On subsequent days, ask students to brainstorm words belonging to the other word families. Keep the umbrella on display in your writing center to inspire a downpour of creativity.

Pitter-Patter Patterning

Shower little ones with some pitter-patter patterning in this tasty raindrop activity. In advance, buy a class supply of lollipops in a variety of colors, making sure you have at least four of each color. Cut out a class supply (plus a few extras) of construction paper raindrops, sizing each one to cover a lollipop; then tape a lollipop to each cutout. Give each child a raindrop lollipop. Then arrange seven youngsters in a row in front of the group, creating an ABAB pattern with their lollipop colors. Then sing this song, naming the two lollipop colors in the appropriate lines. Invite youngsters to hold up their raindrop lollipops when their color is sung in the fourth line. Repeat the activity a few times with different children and different lollipop color patterns; then ask students to create their own ABAB patterns. And when you’re all done singing and patterning, invite each child to sample her tasty raindrop.

(sung to the tune of “If All the Raindrops”)

If all the raindrops were [blue] and [purple] lollipops, Oh, what a rain it would be!
Standing in line with my hands help up high,
[Blue, purple, blue, purple, blue, purple, blue.]
If all the raindrops were [blue] and [purple] lollipops, Oh, what a rain it would be!
**Ring-a-Ling**

This yummy activity is sure to help youngsters remember their telephone numbers. Draw six evenly spaced vertical lines on a sheet of white paper; then make a copy for each child. Program each child’s copy with his telephone number by writing one numeral at the top of each column, as shown. Give each child his paper and a bowl of Cookie-Crisp® cereal. Direct him to place the appropriate number of cereal pieces under each numeral. Then have the child read his telephone number and practice dialing it on a play phone. Afterward invite him to enjoy his cereal as a snack. In the following days, repeat the activity using different types of snack items, such as raisins, cheese puffs, or animal crackers. Once a child is able to recite his phone number from memory, invite him to make an imaginary (or real) call home to announce the good news!

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**Birthday Cakes and More!**

Cutting, counting, and comparing are just a few layers of skills baked into these birthday cakes. To prepare, write each month on a separate sentence strip; then display the strips along the bottom of a classroom wall. Place a few tagboard birthday cake tracers in your art center, along with a supply of construction paper; paper doily halves; birthday candles; and a variety of craft items, such as sequins, buttons, and rickrack. To use the center, a child traces and cuts out a construction paper cake. He writes his name and birthday on his cutout. Next he glues a doily half to the bottom of his cake to represent a cake plate. Then he glues the cake to a full sheet of construction paper. He glues the number of candles equal to his age onto his cake. Finally, he decorates his cake with his choice of craft items.

Once all the birthday cakes are made, invite each child to show his creation to the class. Then have him tape his cake on the wall above the appropriate month. Together count the birthdays for each month; then compare the results. This activity is layered with learning opportunities galore!
How Old Are You?

Oh, how a child loves to hold up her fingers to show off her age! And here’s a way to have her do just that while she practices a few math skills. Write “How old are you?” at the top of a sheet of chart paper. Create and label a column for each age represented by the children in your class. Display the chart in a center.

Have each child at this center trace her hand onto construction paper; then help her cut it out. (Have children older than five years of age trace and cut out both hands; then staple the cutouts side by side.) Have her fold and glue down the appropriate number of fingers on her cutout so that the raised fingers represent her age. Then have her tape her cutout to the column on the chart labeled with her age. Once the graph is complete, have the class count and compare the number of cutouts in each column. How many four-year-olds in our class? Let’s see a show of hands!

Name Bingo

Help youngsters identify letters with this game that uses words they’re very familiar with—their names! To begin, gather a set of alphabet flash cards. Then write each child’s name on a sentence strip. (Use first names, last names, or full names.) Laminate each name strip for durability. To play Name Bingo, give each player his name strip and a washable marker. Show youngsters one letter card at a time. Have the players name the letter. Then instruct each child who has that letter on his name strip to draw a line through the letter. When a player has crossed out each letter in his name, he calls out “Bingo!” Continue play until all the players cross out all the letters in their names. To prepare for a new round, simply wipe the cards clean with a damp paper towel.

Jumping Jacks and Jills

Your little ones will jump up and down over this alphabetical listening activity. Invite students to slowly recite (not sing) the alphabet with you. When you get to the first letter in each child’s first name, invite her to jump up and then sit back down. Perform a silent version of this activity by pointing to each letter on an alphabet chart. And for an added challenge, point to the letters in reverse order. This letter-learning activity will have youngsters listening, looking, leaping, and laughing!
Catching Snowflakes

Capture the thrill of catching snowflakes with this hands-on math activity. Have each child fold and cut one or two coffee filters to create snowflakes. Collect the snowflakes in a white plastic trash bag, which serves as a snow cloud. Then seat one small group of youngsters at a time in a circle around a sturdy chair. Carefully stand on the chair, holding the snow cloud as you sing this song. At the appropriate time, empty the bag; then invite each child to catch as many falling snowflakes as possible. Ask her to count and report the number she catches. Then refill the snow cloud for another snowfall. At a later time, you might chart the number of each group’s captured and missed snowflakes and then compare the results.

(sung to the tune of “Sing a Song of Sixpence”)

See a cloud of snowflakes floating in the sky.
Let’s all try to catch one. Let’s give it a try!
When the cloud bursts open, the snowflakes will fall down.
How many snowflakes can you catch before they touch the ground?

Snow Prints

Watch youngsters’ math skills snowball with this cool counting activity. For each child, fold a large sheet of blue construction paper in half twice; then unfold it to reveal four sections as shown. Program each section with a different numeral. Then ask each child to print the number of snowflakes corresponding to the numeral in each section. To make a snowflake, have the child dip the end of an empty thread spool into white paint and then stamp the spool onto his paper. After the paint dries, have each child count the total number of his snowflakes. Then help him record that numeral on the back of his paper. Brrr! It’s a counting blizzard!

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A Blanket of Snow

Use this idea to cover some important visual and reasoning skills. In advance, collect a white bed sheet and several items with recognizable shapes, such as a thick book, a large ball, and a handled basket. Show the items to the children; then have them close their eyes and imagine that a blizzard is blowing into your room. While their eyes are closed, cover one of the items with the sheet and remove the remaining items from sight. Then challenge youngsters to open their eyes and guess the identity of the “snow-covered” item. Then “blow” the snow away to reveal the mystery shape beneath it.

Repeat the activity as student interest dictates, using items of different shapes.

ABC Snowmen

Enlist the help of these snowmen to review the alphabet. In advance, write the poem below on chart paper. Then program each of 26 die-cut snowmen with a different letter. Laminate the snowmen for durability; then place them in a pocket chart. Display the snowmen with the rhyme. Working with one small group at a time, recite the rhyme. Point to each letter as you name it. Then evenly distribute the snowmen to the group members. Challenge them to sequence the snowmen alphabetically in the pocket chart, using the rhyme as a reference when necessary.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
Meet our snowmen A to Z.
H, I, J, K, L, and M.
We can learn so much from them.
N, O, P, Q, R, S, T.
Use the letter on each tummy…
U, V, W, X, Y, Z.
To line them up alphabetically.

“Rappin’” Up for the Cold

Reinforce the names of body parts when little ones dress to “brrr-ave” this blizzard. Invite youngsters to imagine that a heavy snow is blowing around outdoors. Then, as you say this rap, have them put on each imaginary clothing item.

It’s snowin’! It’s blowin’!
I want to go outside!
First I must dress in clothes that are right.
A hat on my head, so warm and tight.
A scarf round my neck so the wind won’t bite.
A coat for my body and snow pants to match.
Mittens on my hands for the snow that I catch.
Boots on my feet to keep my toes warm too.
With all I’m wearing, it’s a wonder I can move!

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To line them up alphabetically.
It's in the Stars

Your little stars will sparkle with delight when they create these star-studded name posters. To prepare, write each child’s name in large letters on a sheet of white construction paper. Back each page with black construction paper; then staple the corners of the pages together. To make a poster, ask each child to position her paper over a large piece of cardboard or a folded towel. Have her use a pushpin to make closely spaced holes along the lines of each letter. (Children may want to complete this task over a few work sessions, especially if they have longer names.) Then help her carefully separate the two pages. Invite the child to hold her black page up to the light. The tiny holes will look like stars that spell out her name! Display the name posters in a window to show off your stars to the world.

Shapely Rockets

These rockets are loaded with opportunities for following directions and recognizing shapes. In advance, cut out a supply of squares, rectangles, and triangles from various colors of construction paper. Place the shapes on a table, along with sheets of black construction paper, glue sticks, glitter, and star stickers. Then invite one small group at a time to create rockets as students listen to the directions below. After each child builds his rocket, invite him to decorate the sky surrounding it with his choice of glitter or star stickers.

—Find a square. Glue it to the bottom of the paper.
—Find a rectangle. Glue it on top of the square.
—Find a triangle. Glue it on top of the rectangle.
Earth Circles Round the Sun
Teach youngsters this space-related chant to reinforce the days of the week.

Earth circles round the Sun
One time every day.
Sunup, sundown.
That’s what we know.
Time to sleep and play.

Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday, Saturday,
Sunday.

Circle one hand around the other.
Hold up one finger.
Raise hands up and down.

Rest head on hands. Open eyes and smile.

Slap thighs; then clap hands.
Slap thighs; then clap hands.
Slap thighs.

Sun Prints
Shine some light on your youngsters’ name and letter recognition skills with this sunny activity. On a bright, sunny morning, give each child letter cutouts to spell his first (or last) name. Help him back each letter with a piece of rolled tape; then have him tape his letters onto a sheet of construction paper to spell his name. Place the papers outside in direct sunlight for several hours. Then have each child carefully remove the letters from his paper. What did he discover? Explain that the parts of the paper exposed to the Sun faded, but the areas covered by the letters were protected from the light and did not fade. Children will be amazed at the power of the Sun!

Far Out!
Bring the concept of ordinal numbers closer to home with this solar system activity. To begin, label each of nine paper plates with a different planet name. Label a yellow paper plate “Sun.”

During a group time, explain that the nine planets in our solar system move around the Sun and each one is a different distance away from the Sun. Ask a student to hold the yellow paper plate and stand in front of the group to represent the Sun. Then give the plate labeled “Mercury” to another child and ask him to stand next to the Sun. Explain that Mercury is first in line next to the Sun. Continue with the remaining eight planets, naming each one and discussing its order in line from the Sun. Then invite student volunteers to answer as you pose questions, such as “Which planet is third from the Sun? Which planet is fifth?” Repeat this space expedition until ordinal numbers and the planets are less alien to your little space travelers.
Active Arachnids

Teach youngsters this song about active arachnids to reinforce number skills. Appoint children to take the roles of Mother Spider and each of the five little spiders. Send the five spiders to a designated “web.” During the song, signal the appropriate number of spiders to crawl back to Mother at the end of each verse. Pause to encourage students to count the returning spiders. Repeat the song until every child has had a chance to role-play a spider.

*(sung to the tune of “Five Little Ducks Went Out to Play”)*

Five black spiders went out to play
On a web so far away.
Mother Spider said, “Come back. Come back.”
Four little spiders came crawling back.

Four little spiders...
Three little spiders...
Two little spiders...

One little spider went out to play
On a web so far away.
Mother Spider said, “Come back. Come back.”
No little spiders came crawling back.

Now Mother Spider was very wise.
She made a meal of tasty flies.
Mother Spider called, “It’s time to eat!”
Five little spiders came home for a treat!

Creepy-Crawly Calendar

If it’s October, then it’s time to update your calendar with these student-made numeral cards. To prepare, give each child a white construction paper square that is sized to fit a numeral box on your class calendar. Invite him to illustrate his square with a spider or bat. Then help him label his card with a designated numeral from the calendar. Replace your ordinary calendar numerals with these spooky bat and spider cards and use them during your daily calendar activities. To reinforce numeral recognition skills, occasionally ask a child to identify his calendar card and the numeral on it.
**The Bats Are Out Tonight**

Set youngsters’ sights on counting skills with this nocturnal number song. If desired, cut out ten felt bats for flannelboard use with the song. Or encourage youngsters to hold up the appropriate number of fingers as they sing along.

*(sung to the tune of “When the Saints Go Marching In”)*

Oh, when the bats come out tonight,
Oh, when the bats come out tonight,
Oh, I will count them as they fly by,
When the bats come out tonight.

Oh, I see one, two, three, four, five,
Oh, I see six, seven, eight, nine, ten.
Oh, how I love to count those night creatures,
When the bats come out at night.

*Repeat the first verse.*

**Batty Shapes**

Use this idea to bat around the notion that bats might be found in many different sizes and shapes. To prepare, give each child a sheet of white paper and a black crayon. On your own paper, show youngsters how to draw a bat using a variety of sizes of a single shape. For example, you might draw an oval bat body with two oval wings and small oval eyes. Then challenge youngsters to draw their own bats using shapes such as diamonds, triangles, rectangles, circles, squares, or hearts. Invite each little one to share his drawing with the class; then ask the class to identify the shape used for the bat.

**Bat Match**

Youngsters’ number skills will take flight with this batty activity. Enlarge the bat pattern on page 62; then trace and cut out a desired number of black tagboard bats. Use a white paint pen or correction pen to write a different numeral on the left wing of each bat. Affix the corresponding number of Halloween stickers on each right wing. Cut each bat apart at its wings; then place all the pieces in a center. To use, a child assembles each bat by matching a wing set. To vary this activity, program each set of wings with matching uppercase and lowercase letters or with pictures and corresponding initial consonant sounds. For younger students, program each wing pair with identical letters, numerals, or sticker quantities.
Thanksgiving

Cornucopia Counting
Your youngsters will feast their eyes and their taste buds on these fruity cornucopias. In advance, copy, color, and cut out ten tagboard cornucopia patterns (page 63). Program each cut-out with a numeral from 1 to 10; then laminate the cutouts for durability. Place them in a center with napkins, a scoop, and a container of Trix® cereal. To use the center, the child scoops some cereal onto a napkin. Then she counts out and places the appropriate number of cereal pieces onto each cornucopia. Have her check her work for accuracy. Then invite the child to snack on the cereal for a fruity feast!

Arrowhead Necklace
If your celebration of Thanksgiving leads to a discussion about Native Americans, try creating these Native American necklaces for some practice with patterning. To make one, trace a diamond-shaped cookie cutter onto tagboard; then cut it out. Decorate the resulting “arrowhead” with different shapes or designs. (If desired, display Native American symbols to inspire your youngsters.) Glue two feathers to one end of the arrowhead; then punch a hole in the opposite end. String a length of twine or plastic lanyard through the hole. Then string beads onto either side of the arrowhead, creating a pattern with two or three different colors. Tie the ends of the necklace together; then invite each child to model her special jewelry with pride.

Dressing the Turkey
This turkey activity is stuffed with all the right ingredients to cook up a batch of letter skills. In advance, cut out one large and one small construction paper turkey body. Then cut out a set of 26 proportionally sized construction paper feathers for each turkey body. Program each large feather with an uppercase letter and each small feather with a lowercase letter; then laminate all the pieces. To use, display the turkey bodies on the floor during group time. Distribute the feathers to students. Then have your class “feather” the turkeys alphabetically, starting on the left side of each turkey. Each time a child places his feather on a turkey, invite him to proudly strut back to his seat. Afterward, put the feathers in a center along with wipe-off markers. Invite each child to trace the letters and then pair the uppercase and lowercase letters. To prepare the center for the next li’l gobbler, simply wipe the feathers clean with a paper towel.
A Shipshape Mayflower

It’s sure to be smooth sailing when your youngsters make this picture of the Mayflower with various shapes. In advance, cut sponges to create semicircles, rectangles, squares, and triangles (refer to the illustration for sizes). Place the sponge shapes in your art center, along with shallow trays of paint in different colors, markers, and sheets of light blue construction paper. Use the sponges to create a sample project to which students may refer.

A child at this center sponge-paints the various shapes (in her choice of colors) onto a sheet of light blue paper to create a picture of the Mayflower. She uses a marker to create the lines for the sails and to write her name on her paper. Challenge each artist to identify each shape used in her picture and to count the number of each shape used.

We’re Thankful For...

Help youngsters recognize the people, places, and things for which they are thankful this Thanksgiving. In advance, display a large bulletin-board-paper turkey body. Then cut out a set of three large construction paper turkey feathers for each child, plus one set for yourself. Label each of three baskets with “person,” “place,” or “thing.” Then discuss with your students the many things for which they are thankful. Ask each child to illustrate a person for whom she is thankful on one of her feathers. Likewise, have her illustrate a place and a thing on her remaining feathers. (Illustrate your own three feathers in the same way.) Point out the labels on the baskets. Show students each of your feathers; then place each in the corresponding basket. Invite youngsters to sort their feathers in the same way. Then display the feathers, arranging them by category on the turkey. Title the display “We’re Gobblin’ Grateful for These People, Places, and Things.”
Flyin’ High, Flyin’ Low
Youngsters’ understanding of opposites will take flight with these airplanes. To make a simple airplane, help each child glue two wide craft sticks together, as shown. After the glue dries, have him decorate his airplane with markers. Then invite your young pilots to take their airplanes to an open area outdoors for a test flight. Designate yourself as the air traffic controller. Then give youngsters instructions, such as “Fly your plane high.” Encourage youngsters to “fly” their planes as directed (without really releasing them into the air). Then say, “Fly your plane low.” Repeat the activity a few times, each time using a different opposite pair, such as slow/fast and straight/crooked. End your flight with a landing that starts off rough and finishes up smooth!

Pattern Train
“Choo-choose” this train activity to strengthen patterning skills. In advance, dye a supply of pasta wheels two different colors. To do this, put the pasta into a resealable plastic bag. Add one-half cup of rubbing alcohol and a few drops of food coloring; then shake the bag until the pasta is the desired color. Spread the pasta out on paper towels to dry. Next, cut a supply of rectangles from black construction paper to represent train cars. Place the train cars and pasta wheels in a center.

At this center, a child lines up as many train cars as he desires to make a train. He then adds wheels to his train, creating a color pattern as he works. After he explains his pattern to you or to a classmate, he puts away the wheels and cars for the next pattern engineer to use.
Youngsters’ counting skills will roll right along with this transportation song. To prepare, duplicate and color the unicycle, bicycle, tricycle, and automobile patterns on page 64. Display the pictures on a flannelboard. Discuss these modes of transportation and ask student volunteers to count the number of wheels on each vehicle before singing this song:

(sung to the tune of “The Wheels on the Bus”)

Rollin’ down the road on my [unicycle].
My [unicycle], my [unicycle].
Rollin’ down the road on my [unicycle],
I have [one] big wheel(s).

Continue with other verses, substituting the following words and numbers for the underlined words:

I have four wheels.
I carry your family from place to place.
I begin with a c. What am I? (a car)

I carry many passengers.
I drive on city streets.
I begin with a b. What am I? (a bus)

Highway 123

Take a test drive on Highway 123 to reinforce colors and ordinal numbers. To begin, cut a four-inch-wide length of black bulletin board paper to represent a road. Use chalk to draw the center line on the road; then laminate the paper road for durability. Collect a set of small cars in different colors. Then invite a small student group to drive the cars on the road. After a brief period of exploration, have students line up their cars on the road. Ask the children to name the color of the first car. Then ask them to identify the colors of the second and third cars. Continue in this manner until the ordinal position and color of every car in line has been named. Then have the group repeat the activity using a different color sequence. After several rounds, invite the next group to roll on over for its turn. What a speedy way to learn ordinal numbers!
Rhymin’ Time for Valentines

Leave it to these valentine poems to sweeten your youngsters’ rhyming skills. Copy the poems onto paper. Make enough copies so that each child will have one poem. Then play a simple rhyming game with your class. Simply say a word; then ask students to name words that rhyme with the word. Afterward share these poems. Ask youngsters to supply the missing word in each one. Then give each child a copy of one of the poems. Help him write the missing word in the blank. Invite him to glue his poem onto a large construction paper heart and then to decorate it with valentine stickers. Encourage him to deliver his poem to his favorite valentine.

Valentine, valentine,
Please be true.
Valentine, valentine,
I love _____. (you)

Valentine, valentine,
Please be mine.
Valentine, valentine,
You’re so _____. (fine)

Valentine, valentine,
You’re so sweet.
Valentine, valentine,
You knock me off my _____. (feet)

Opposites Attract

Attract attention to opposites with these valentine puzzles. Cut out a supply of construction paper hearts equal to half the number of children in your class. Program each side of the cutout with a word from an opposite pair. (If desired, add picture clues for younger children.) Then puzzle-cut each heart cutout to create two halves.

Show the hearts to the group, discussing each pair of opposites. Then mix up the heart halves and give one to each child. Help him read the word on his puzzle piece before having him search for the child with its opposite. When two children complete their heart puzzle, have them sit together in your group area. Then review the opposite pairs once more.
You’re All Heart

Introduce some new body parts vocabulary with this activity that’s all heart…and chest…and knees…and elbows! To prepare, cut out a red construction paper heart for each child. Distribute the cutouts; then ask your little valentines to use them to perform this heartfelt song.

*(sung to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It”)*

Put your heart on your chest, on your chest.
Put your heart on your chest, on your chest.
Put your heart on your chest ‘cause that’s where it fits the best.
Put your heart on your chest, on your chest.

Put your heart on your knee, on your knee.
Put your heart on your knee, on your knee.
Put your heart on your knee—what a silly place to be.
Put your heart on your knee, on your knee.

Continue with other verses, replacing the body part and the last part of the third line with one of the following:

elbow…like a funny little fellow.
calf…then giggle, giggle, laugh.
thigh…then give a little sigh.

My “Sweet-chart”

Kindergartners will think this categorizing and counting activity is a colorful, tasty treat! In advance, make a chart similar to the one shown; then make one copy for every two children in your class. Place the charts and a supply of candy hearts in a center. To use the center, each child in a student pair writes his name on the chart. The partners read the color words in the first column and then color each heart the corresponding color. Then each child takes ten candy hearts. He sorts his candy by color. Then he counts the number of each heart color and writes that numeral in the appropriate box on the chart. Afterward, the partners compare their quantities for each color. The child with the larger amount writes his name in the corresponding box. Invite each pair to end this activity in a sweet way—by eating the candy hearts. Yum!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rodney</th>
<th>Kenny</th>
<th>Who has more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pink</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Rodney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>green</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rodney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orange</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hearty Handshake

Pass along some number fun with these hearty handshakes. Cut out a class supply of small red construction paper hearts; then label each heart with a different numeral from 1 up to the number of children in your class. Explain that you will show each child how to give a hearty handshake. Before shaking his hand, slip a heart cutout into your palm. Then heartily shake the child’s hand, pressing the heart into his palm. After every child receives a handshake and a heart, have youngsters identify the numerals on their hearts. Then invite them to sequence themselves into a valentine number line.
Wild Opposites

Here’s the tall and short of it—youngsters will roar with delight over this opposites exploration. To begin, write “The zebra is fast, but the hippopotamus is slow” on chart paper. Point out that the characteristics of each animal are opposites. Then ask youngsters to name other animals that fit each description. Label a sticky note with each student response; then affix each one over the appropriate animal—zebra or hippopotamus—to create a new sentence. Read each sentence aloud with the class. Then write a different sentence, this time using other animals and opposite characteristics. For instance, you might write “The elephant is big, but the monkey is little.” Once again, ask students to brainstorm other animals to insert into the sentence.

Animal Magnetism

With zoo animals as the main feature, youngsters are sure to be attracted to this prereading activity. Label each of a supply of sentence strips with a zoo animal name and a corresponding stamp, sticker, or drawing that shows the animal. (Use either capital or lowercase letters, to match your set of magnetic letters.) Laminate the strips for durability; then attach magnetic tape to the back of each strip. Place the sentence strips and magnetic letters in a center with a magnet board or near a metal filing cabinet.

Invite a child at this center to put a sentence strip on the magnetic surface. Then have her spell out the animal name with the magnetic letters, using the sentence strip as a guide. For older students, you might cut each strip apart to separate the animal picture and name. Then have youngsters match each picture to its name before spelling out the word with the magnetic letters.
**A ZOO REVIEW**

Watch little ones go ape over this zoo counting chant. Write the chant on chart paper. Program each of ten sticky notes with a different numeral from 1 to 10. Then teach youngsters the chant. After a few rounds, give each sticky note to a different volunteer. Repeat the chant, inviting each child to affix her sticky note to the matching number word on the chart.

As a variation, print the chant with numerals in place of the number words. Label sticky notes with the corresponding number words for students to match to the chart.

*(charted to the tune of “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe”)*

One, two, who’s at the zoo?  
Three, four, lions galore.  
Five, six, birds and fish.  
Seven, eight, bears and apes.  
Nine, ten, the fun never ends!

**THIS PLACE IS A ZOO!**

Your classroom is bound to look like a zoo when youngsters bring in toy animals from home for show-and-tell. Invite each child to bring a stuffed zoo animal to share with the class during group time. Then collect all the animals and have students work together to sort the animals into designated categories, such as animal types, colors, or sizes. Use the same categories for some patterning practice with the zoo animals. Ask youngsters to pattern the animals by color (such as brown bear, black gorilla, brown monkey, black panther) or by size (such as giraffe, turtle, ostrich, mouse). Or have youngsters pattern the animals by other characteristics, such as leg count, tail/no tail, or stripes/spots. No matter what pattern you follow, youngsters will have a roaring good time!

**COUNT ON ZOO ANIMALS**

Assign each little zookeeper to count the animals in his own stamp-art zoo. To prepare, stamp a different zoo animal stamp on each of ten notecards. Then write a numeral from 1 to 10 on each card. Laminate the cards for durability. Then, for each child, fold a large sheet of construction paper twice to create four sections. Place the cards, the unfolded papers, the stamp pads, and the animal stamps in a center.

At this center, a child selects a card and finds the matching animal stamp. Then, on one section of his paper, he stamps the number of animals corresponding to the numeral on the card. He repeats the procedure for each section of his paper. Then he counts the total number of zoo animals on his paper and writes the sum on the back.
Bunny Pattern
Use with “Matching Bunny Ears” on page 4 and “Bunnies That Measure Up” on page 5.
You Can Count On Community Helpers

- mail carrier
- police officers
- firefighters
- teachers
- nurses

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Climbing Jack
Use with “A Fine Vine” on page 14.

Sheep Pattern
Use with “Mary’s Colorful Lambs,” “Hide-and-Sheep,” and “Have You Any Wool?” on page 35.
Bingo Card
Use with “Garden Bingo” on page 26.
Food Cards
Use with "Shape Up With Healthful Foods" on page 37.

- orange
- bread
- granola bar
- egg
- bagel
- cheese
- meat loaf
- potato
- blueberries
- cracker
- graham cracker
- lemon
- watermelon
- pie
- pizza

Bat Pattern
Use with "Bat Match" on page 49.
Vehicle Patterns

Use with “Wheels” on page 53.

unicycle

bicycle

tricycle

automobile