

Compare Two Amounts

Yes, you showed me the one that has less dough.



Give your child something to play with, such as playdough or water, that can be divided into two parts.

You can help your child notice amounts and talk about them using the words *more* and *less*.



Why this is important

Recognizing the difference between two amounts is the basis for many math concepts. Your child will enjoy grouping, dividing, and pouring to create amounts she can label with *more* and *less*. Later, she will use her skills to arrange items in a series.

What you do

- Provide playdough for your child.
- Notice when she divides her playdough: *You made this into two different parts. Look, this ball has more playdough and this ball has less.*
- Move the balls around on the table and say, *Point to the one that has more dough. Point to the one that has less.*
- Continue the game by pressing the dough back together and then making a new ball from part of the dough.
- Show her the ball you made and suggest that she make a smaller ball, one with less dough. Describe the balls using the words *more* and *less*.
- Encourage her to use the words by asking, *How much dough does this one have? How much does the other one have?* Help her with the words as needed.

Another idea

Play the game again using two identical cups with water. Your child will learn a new form of more and less by looking at the level of the water in the cups. Then try other materials and containers, such as sand in buckets, air in balloons, or yogurt in bowls.

Let's read together!

Little Rabbits' First Number Book
by Alan Baker

Restore the Circle



Cut a large paper circle into two pieces and let your child fit the two pieces together to form the circle again.

Your child will see that things can be divided and restored.

You're making it into a circle.



Why this is important

Being able to visualize the whole from its parts is necessary for many tasks your child will want to do. She will learn to recognize that actions such as dividing a circle can be reversed. Letters and numbers are typically made from parts such as lines and circles, so this game helps her get ready to recognize number and letter symbols.

What you do

- Cut out a few large paper circles. Invite your child to play a new game with you.
- Show her one of the circles and talk about what makes it a circle: *This is a circle. Look at its round shape.*
- Hold the circle and let her trace her finger around the edge. Place the circle on the table and, with her hand on top of your hand, trace the entire edge of the circle.
- Think of words such as *plate*, *pie*, and *circle* to describe the shape.
- Use scissors to cut the paper in half. Show her each curved piece.
- Ask her to put the circle back together.
- Trace the finished circle again and tell her, *You made it a circle again!*
- Try cutting the circle into several pieces to make the game a little harder. Make sure you keep the game short and stop when she loses interest.

Ready to move on?

Other shapes, such as triangles and squares, are harder to restore. Move on to these shapes when your child is immediately successful with the circle. Adjust the difficulty of the game by changing the number of pieces you create when cutting the shape.

Let's read together!

I Spy Shapes In Art
by Lucy Micklethwait

The Knee Star

*Here's a star for
your knee.*

Put a star sticker or some other marker on a part of your child's body and talk about that part throughout the day.

Your child will learn to locate body parts and recognize their names.





Why this is important

Knowing the words for body parts helps your child understand when other people talk about them. You can give your child markers that help locate body parts and connect them with their names. Knowing words that refer to his own body helps him build a better understanding of himself.

What you do

- Begin by playing a quick review game to find out which body parts your child already knows. Say, *Touch your neck. Touch your elbow. Touch your ankle.*
- Choose a body part your child is not aware of. Then, make it clear where that body part is by marking it. For example, if you choose *knee*, make it clear where his knee is by putting a star sticker on it.
- Remind him during the day about where to find his knee: *I see that you're bending your knees. Your knees are under the table when you sit in that chair.*
- Think about body parts that are not used every day such as shin, knuckle, and sole. Find an interesting way to mark each one you teach.
- Invite your child to go back and rename each part as he adds to his list of words.

Another idea

Help your child recognize body parts on others by inviting him to find your shin, ankle, etc. He can also find the parts on a doll as he finds them on his own body.

Let's read together!

Toes, Ears, & Nose!
by Karen Katz

Prepare for Sharing

You girls are using that wagon together.



Create an opportunity for sharing by offering toys such as puppets and wagons to your child and a friend.

You will encourage sharing by giving the children toys that work best when shared and by encouraging their efforts to play together.



Two people can get a lot of sand in the bucket.



Why this is important

By arranging a play space that makes sharing and cooperation more likely, you encourage your child to practice sharing materials and equipment with other children. Explaining to the children when they should take turns, work together, or trade helps your child learn to value sharing. This game helps your child get ready for more complex tasks that are accomplished through a group effort.

What you do

- Look for opportunities to create sharing moments between your child and others.
- Arrange a special play corner indoors where children can play together. Start with two children and invite more friends as your child feels comfortable sharing.
- Offer a few duplicate toys so that not all toys need to be shared. Include puppets or blocks that encourage interaction between children.
- Outside, try inviting the children to use a wagon. One child can pull while another rides.
- Notice any cooperation and respond positively: *Edwina, you hopped right out of the wagon and gave Joni a turn before she even said she was tired of pulling. You girls are sharing the wagon like such good friends.*

Another idea

Use an egg timer or portable oven timer with a bell if the children need help knowing when to trade toys. Explain the timer to the children. *Everyone gets a turn to play with the truck. Let's set the timer. When the bell rings, it's time to trade.*

Let's read together!

Yo! Yes!
by Chris Raschka

Stories With Three

*Can you count
the chairs?*

When reading books that illustrate the concept of *three*, stop and let your child count items that come in threes.

Your child will gain a fuller understanding of the number *three* by hearing it in stories and by counting.

One for daddy bear...



Why this is important

Now that your child is 3 years old, he may show interest in objects that come in threes. You can strengthen his concept of *three* by telling traditional stories that are built around the number three.

What you do

- Bring the number *three* to your child's attention by telling or reading stories with threes such as *Three Perfect Peaches*, *The Three Bears*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*.
- Emphasize the number *three* in the title: *Let's read the story The Three Bears. Look, here are their pictures: 1, 2, 3. Three bears.*
- Count items in the story that are grouped in threes such as the bowls, chairs, or beds.
- Have your child use objects such as blocks, clothespins, or crackers as counters. Help your child practice handling groups of three: *Count out some crackers to show how many bears there were in the story. Yes! Let's put that group over here. Now can you count out more crackers to show how many bowls there were?*
- Encourage your child to do most of the counting and talking as you move through the story or count objects. Play this game with different books and objects to help your child learn that *three* is a word and a concept used to describe three items.

Another idea

Look for books with three wishes, three tasks, three fairies, etc. You can go to your local library and ask for help in finding stories with a theme of *three*.

Let's read together!

The Three Bears
by Byron Barton

What's It For?

*Is that something
to build with?*

No!



*Which of these
things can we
build with?*



As you look at various objects and pictures with your child, ask a question about the purpose of the item.

Your child will practice grouping objects by thinking about what they are used for.



Why this is important

Classifying items into groups is a basic way to organize our knowledge. Your child will have the chance to practice sorting as she hears the names of categories that explain the uses and functions of objects. By guiding your child to focus on items one at a time, you are showing her how to deal with big tasks slowly and systematically.

What you do

- Gather several objects or pictures of objects. Spread the objects out in front of your child and invite her to play.
- Start by saying, *Some of these are things we can wear. Let's find out which ones.*
- Let your child examine each object as you talk about it.
- Keep your questions age-appropriate. Use *Yes/No* questions if your child is unable to say more about an item. Confirm her answers to let her know that you understand her: *You're right, I can't imagine anyone wearing a crayon! Let's put that over here in a pile of things you can't wear.*
- Challenge your child to use each object, even if her first guess at classifying is incorrect. *Can you wear that book on your head? No, I guess it goes in the other pile, right?*
- Continue the game until all the objects are classified.
- Try categories such as *things we ride, things we use to eat, things we read, etc.*

Another idea

You can make the game more active by placing the piles around the room. Your child will need to pick up each object, examine it, and then carry it to the appropriate pile.

Let's read together!

Around the House
by Victoria Huseby

Ride a Trike



Describe your child's experience as she rides a tricycle.

You can provide a safe environment and teach her new words as your child learns this fun motor skill.

*Good steering!
You're riding right
down this path.*



Why this is important

Riding a tricycle can provide your child with a new way of getting around. She must learn to move the trike and steer at the same time. She must make decisions about slowing down and stopping while riding something that moves faster than she can walk. Use this opportunity to teach her words that describe space and action. Helping her feel safe on a tricycle builds her confidence as she gains control of the trike.

What you do

- Show your child the tricycle, and then leave it in her play space for her to explore when she feels ready. **Make sure your child always wears a helmet when riding. Even when she practices simply sitting on the bike, she can get used to the feeling of wearing a helmet.**
- Notice how she discovers the ways the trike moves. She may sit on it, turn it upside down and spin the wheels, or turn the handlebars back and forth.
- Use words to help her talk about her actions. For direction, she can learn *turn, ahead, path,* and *guide*. For movement, teach her *slow, fast, stop,* and *go*. And for the tricycle she can learn *pedal, handlebars, wheels,* and *seat*.
- Offer ideas about what she can expect when riding: *When you're ready to make that turn, you will need to slow down. Do you think the path between the posts is wide enough to go through?*
- Give her your full attention and occasional direction as she builds her skills. Although it may seem fun to invite her friends to ride along, it is important for her to ride alone while she learns to control the tricycle.

Another idea

Make a few road signs, such as *stop* and *go*, that will help her learn the rules of riding.

Let's read together!

Do Princesses Scrape Their Knees?
by Carmela LaVigna Coyle

Button and Zip



Lead your child through the steps of buttoning and unbuttoning and zipping and unzipping.

Your child will become more confident with her personal care skills of dressing and undressing.

*You're moving
that zipper up,
up, up.*



Why this is important

Guiding your child in learning to button and zip helps her learn the skills needed for independent dressing. Children who are struggling to be independent often are unwilling to accept the help they need. By learning the more difficult steps like buttoning and zipping, she will be able to take care of her own dressing at home or school.

What you do

- Give your child a smock or sweater with large buttons and buttonholes. Explain and demonstrate how to put the button through the buttonhole.
- Show her how to push the button halfway through the hole. Then, hold that part of the button as she pulls the cloth over the other half.
- Keep a few garments handy that have easy-to-fasten buttons. Let her practice during a long car ride or while waiting at the doctor's office. Encourage her to button her own clothes when she is ready.
- Teach her how to zip a zipper by letting her zip up your coat for you. Explain how to hold the bottom of the coat as she pulls up on the zipper.
- Resist the urge to finish the job for her. She needs lots of practice to master this skill!

Another idea

Invite your child to practice buttoning and zipping in front of a mirror. Encourage her to show a friend or relative what she is learning.

Let's read together!

Zippers, Buttons, and Bows
by Moira Butterfield

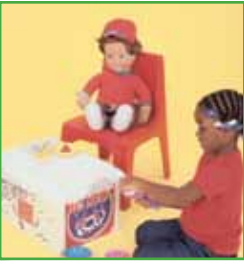
Two-Step Directions

Take the papers out of the box, and then you can use it as a picnic table.

Offer your child directions that ask for two or more actions.

Two-step directions give your child practice in understanding and completing all the parts of a task.





Why this is important

Your child can learn to follow clear, multi-step directions when you give her opportunities to practice. Following directions is very important in school, and people follow verbal and written directions throughout their lives. Participation in most shared activities involves giving or following directions.

What you do

- Use this game frequently and over a long period of time (a year or more) to give your child an opportunity to practice following directions in many situations.
- Make the game relaxed and use a friendly tone of voice so that your child feels encouraged to listen to you. Begin with directions that ask for two actions: *Please find your boots and put them in the closet.*
- Create directions to lead her to a surprise: *Look in the grocery bag, and then take what you find to the table for our snack.*
- Keep your directions simple with two actions at first. As she confidently completes the tasks, add more directions until there are three or four steps.
- Remember to thank her for finishing the task, if appropriate. *Thanks! You did exactly what I asked.* Offer encouragement for a job well done. *You looked in the bag and put our surprise snack on the table! Now we can eat our yummy graham crackers.*

Another idea

Use school words, such as *crayons, scissors, books, tables, and chairs*, to help your child prepare for hearing and following directions in the classroom. A few examples of directions she may hear in school are: *Put some newspaper down before you begin to paint. When you get up, push your chair in, please. Take a book from the shelf and then go and sit where we can read a story.*

Let's read together!

Pete's A Pizza
by William Steig

Family Album

*What does Daddy
like to eat?*



Help your child make an album of photos and facts about his family.

The process will help your child organize and express his knowledge of his family.



*Tell me about
our family.*



Why this is important

A simple album can remind young children of their substantial family knowledge and family relationships. Creating an album will help your child think about the members of his family and what they do. An album also may increase your child's enjoyment of books, pictures, and print.

What you do

- Take a week or more to help your child create an album that tells something about his family.
- Create a page for each family member by gluing or taping a photo of that person to a sheet of paper.
- Help your child choose a family member each day to think about: *What is Mommy's favorite food? Favorite color? An activity she likes?*
- Encourage your child to ask the family member if he does not already know the answers to your questions.
- Help him search through magazines to find pictures that represent the answer to each question. Give him glue or tape to attach the pictures to the photo page. Or, offer him some crayons or markers to see if he would like to draw the pictures.
- Build the story of his family, one member at a time, until all pages are completed.
- Ask your child to decorate a page to use as the cover, and then fasten the pages together to make a book.
- Take time to review the book together, and invite your child to share the book with others.

Another idea

Invite your child to share his family album with a visitor. You may enjoy hearing how your child describes his family and the details he remembers.

Let's read together!

All Families Are Special
by Norma Simon