

Sorting and Classifying with Infants and Toddlers!!

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Sorting and classifying can easily be implemented into the day in natural ways with children.



Parent Resource Cont.

Sorting and classifying is a math skill children will need to master for future math learning. At a very early age, infants show us they know the difference between familiar and unfamiliar adults. One way to learn this skill is to show toddlers where certain toys go when it is time to clean up. “The trucks go in this basket and the dinosaurs go in this basket”. This is sorting. When adults use the words more, fewer, the same as, smaller than, etc., they are teaching classifying. *More* is one of the first math concepts understood by children. Saying “This pile of laundry has more than that pile of laundry” or “Would you like more milk?” is modeling math for children. Always change the tone in your voice to emphasize math words like more, fewer, smaller than, etc.

Infants and toddlers can first begin by sorting objects by color. They can also begin to sort and classify by their shape. During the day, point out circles, triangles and other shapes and talk about how they are the same and different. Learning shapes and numbers are precursors to learning numbers and understanding math. Sorting and matching at an early age will make 1:1 correspondence and number sense easier in the future.

Parent Resource Cont.

Remember to always talk to children about what you are seeing and doing. Much of a child's learning comes from just talking to them. When we point out things like numbers, shapes, sizes and amounts, we are teaching them "math words. Talk about what you are doing as you shop, build things and cook.

[Michigan State University Extension](#) provides the following ideas to extend exposure to sorting and classifying with young children:

- Use *math talk*: "I have more cookies than you do." "I have fewer trucks than you do." "We have the same number of purple blocks."
- Sort and classify items based on color, shape, size or function.
- Math education can begin very early. Place six items in front of a young child; four are similar and two are different. See if they can group similar toys together.
- The next step is sorting. Ask them to sort out the grapes, pineapples, bananas from their snack.

Books that teach classifying and sorting:

"That's Not My Teddy" by Fiona Watt

"Where is my Baby?" by Harriet Zeifert

"Of Colors and Things" by Tana Holden

"Some Things Go Together" by Charlotte Zolotow