

Recommendation 5 (continued)

5. Use games to teach math concepts and skills and to give children practice in applying them.

Games can provide an engaging opportunity to practice and extend skills. If children have fun playing the games, they are more likely to be motivated to practice math.¹⁴⁸ For maximum benefit, teachers should select specific games to match current math objectives. Example 11 provides an example of a game (*Animal Spots*) that reinforces one-to-one

correspondence and cardinality. Games that target different math content areas are often included in math curricula. Games can also be purchased separately or be made by the teacher. Some math concepts may also be highlighted in games that come up during natural play, such as hopscotch or jump rope.

Example 11. The *Animal Spots* game¹⁴⁹

Objective

Practice one-to-one correspondence and cardinality

Materials needed:

- Pictures of animals or materials children can use to draw their own animals
- Small circles of paper to use as spots
- Glue
- A die or spinner to determine the number of spots to place on each animal

Directions: Have each child draw the outline of an animal on a piece of paper, or provide handouts with large outlines of animals. Each child should take a turn throwing the die to determine how many spots to place on his or her animal. The children should count out the number of dots on the face of the die, and then they should choose the same number of “spots” from a bowl of paper circles in the center of the table. After children have selected the correct number of spots, they can glue them onto their animals. Teachers can tailor the *Animal Spots* game for use with the entire class, a small group, or individual children.

Early math content areas covered

- Counting using one-to-one correspondence
- Cardinality

Monitoring children’s progress and tailoring the activity appropriately

- Observe the play, noting each child’s ability to count the number of dots on the die and count out the same number of spots from a larger pile.
- Use one die or a spinner at the beginning; then, use two dice to increase difficulty.

Integrating the activity into other parts of the day

- Have children count out objects from a larger set. For example, a child can choose ten blocks for building or five shapes from a larger collection to use for a collage.