
Ready for School Parent News: **Recognizing and Writing Numerals**

Just as we create environments for children that are rich in written words, we also need to create “numeral-rich” environments, so that children get used to seeing numerals and correspondingly begin to understand their meaning. Point out numerals in the environment – prices on menus, numbers on billboards, or page numbers in a book. Children typically first learn to identify the symbol for a number (“That’s a two!”), secondly connect the symbol to the meaning (understand that a “2” stands for 2 objects) and thirdly, learn to write it.

Some activities follow to help children become familiar with numerals:

- Send your child on a numeral ‘scavenger hunt’ to find objects with numerals in your home (a package of food, price tag, stamp, microwave, etc.) Then you can identify the numerals together.
- Have your child cut out numerals from magazines or newspaper circulars and paste them on another sheet of paper. Then look at and point out the numerals together.
- Whenever possible, accompany the numeral with a pictorial representation of the quantity it represents. For example, next to a “three,” draw three tally marks, three smiley faces or three dots.

Just like writing letters takes practice, writing numerals does as well. Here are some suggestions:

- Offer opportunities to make numerals with dough or clay, pipe cleaners, or popsicle sticks.
- Write one large numeral on each of several sheets of 8 ½” x 11” paper. Put this sheet of paper on a cookie tray with sides and cover the paper with sand or cornstarch. Have your child trace each numeral through the sand or cornstarch with his/her finger.
- Use the same numerals for your child to copy with various writing instruments (magic markers, crayons, fat pencils) and a variety of writing surfaces (paper with and without lines, small chalkboard, journal or blank book, large chart paper, etc.) to provide interest and to keep it fun.
- Provide sidewalk chalk to copy numerals on the sidewalk or driveway.

Continually attach the meaning of numerals to the numerals themselves. For example:

- Provide large Dominoes. Have your child count the dots and match to a numeral or write the numeral.
- Write the numerals 1 – 5 on index cards. Turn the cards face down and you and your child can take turns picking a card, choosing that many blocks and then adding that number of blocks to a block tower.
- Play “count and label” games. Ask, “How many doors are there in our house?” Then write down the answer with the numeral and word. Follow-up by asking how many windows in the room, etc.

Have fun playing with numbers together!

Resource: Copley, J. V. (2000). *The Young Child and Mathematics*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.