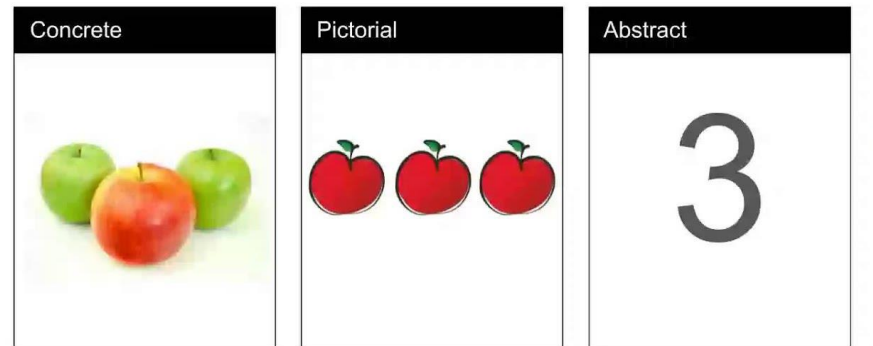


## Teaching for Mastery in EYFS: A Mathematics Guide for Parents

Concrete, Pictorial, Abstract



Concrete is the 'doing' stage, using concrete objects to solve problems.

Pictorial is the 'seeing' stage, using representations of the objects involved in maths problems.

Abstract is the 'symbolic' stage, where children are able to use abstract symbols to model and solve maths problems.

## What is Teaching for Mastery?

Teaching for Mastery in maths allows the pupils to gain a deep understanding of maths, therefore acquiring a secure and long-term understanding so they make continual progress moving onto more complex topics.

We believe that everyone can do maths and there's no such thing as a maths person. Maths is a subject that everyone can and should be able to perform confidently and competently.

Teaching for Mastery means that we choose to teach by breaking down maths objectives into the smallest steps, so that every pupil is secure in every new concept before moving on. We focus upon teaching for fluency, reasoning and problem solving.

## How do we teach for Mastery in Early Years?

### Fluency

In Reception, we aim to teach children to have a deep understanding of number.

### Representing Numbers

We want to develop children's number sense so that they understand the number rather than just recognising the numeral. Children need to understand that numbers can be represented in many ways, not just as a written numeral. We use many different objects and pictures to show that numbers can be represented in lots of ways.

### Some ways to represent five



Children sometimes need lots of practise to recognise numbers in different forms. We play matching games and encourage children to recognise and make different amounts in our indoor and outdoor areas.

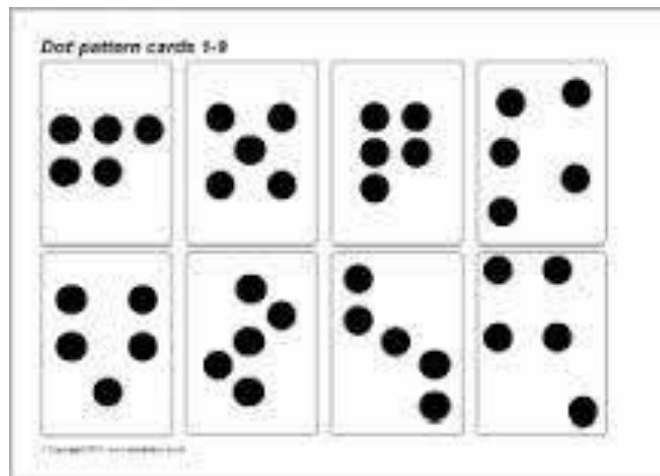
## Counting

When counting, children need to understand...

- That we need to say one number for each object counted (touch counting).
- The final number we say is how many altogether. Some children continue to count after they have reached the final object as they don't connect the numbers they are saying to the objects in front of them.
- That we can count objects in any order and the total stays the same.

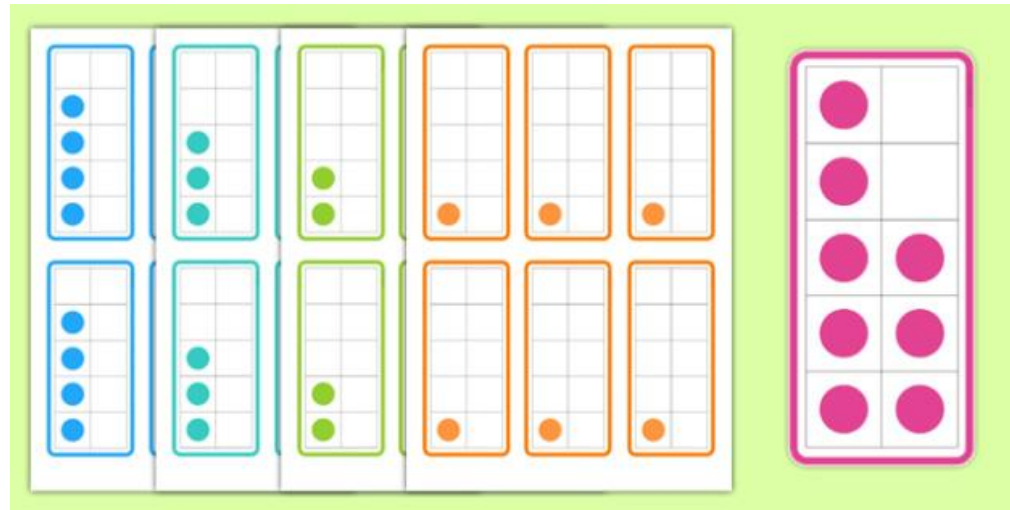
## Recognising amounts

Another skill that is very important is recognising small amounts without the need to count them. Initially this should be by using concrete objects, but as children progress allowing them to see groups of dots in different arrangements helps them to mentally 'see' how many objects are there without needing to count. This is a very important skill when children begin to add and subtract. Using dice is a good way to practise this skill before moving onto objects in different arrangements.



### Understanding that the total stays the same even when the objects move

When children first start to use numbers, they often do not understand that if we move objects into another arrangement the total stays the same. We practise this with many different types of objects but a useful tool is using a tens frame to be able to move counters around.



**Becoming fluent in maths facts allows our brain to concentrate on higher level skills.**

## Reasoning

Reasoning in maths helps children explain their thinking, therefore making it easier for them to understand what is happening in the maths they are doing. It helps them to think about how to solve a problem, explain how they solved it and to think about what they could do differently.

In Reception, some examples of reasoning are:

- true and false statements eg adding one to a number always makes it smaller
- spotting incorrect maths eg 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10
- explaining how we know something or how we worked it out

## Problem Solving

Problem solving in maths allows children to use their maths skills in lots of contexts and in situations that are new to them. It allows them to seek solutions, spot patterns and think about the best way to do things rather than blindly following maths procedures.

In Reception, problem solving might include:

- spotting, following and creating patterns
- estimating amounts of objects
- predicting how many times they can do something in a minute
- sharing objects between different groups - particularly when the amount of groups change and the amount of objects stays the same
- finding different ways to partition numbers eg 5 could be  $5+0$ ,  $4+1$ ,  $3+2$  etc 5

## How can I help at home?

- Count - steps up the stairs, money into a money box etc
- Ask children to say how many without counting (5 or fewer)
- Play games using dice/dominoes and encourage child to say how many spots without counting.
- Ask children to set the table with enough knives, forks and plates for everyone.
- Spot numbers in the environment - on phones, microwaves, clocks, registration plates, doors.
- Ask children to think of their own representations for numbers eg one of them, two hands, three bears, four wheels on a car, five toes, six sides on a dice, seven dwarfs, eight legs on an octopus etc
- Deliberately make mistakes. Children need to understand that mistakes are normal and everyone makes them eg get mixed up when counting, muddle two numbers when ordering them.
- Watch Numberblocks on Cbeebies. This programme is written by maths specialists to model maths concepts and represents number brilliantly. Also, Numberjacks is excellent for solving problems.
- Hide numbers around the house or garden for children to find.
- Play outdoor maths games like hopscotch and skittles. Even better, let children make up their own games and decide how to score points.

- Read books with maths concepts eg The Very Hungry Caterpillar, One is a snail, ten is a crab, What's the time, Mr Wolf? The doorbell rang.
- Draw attention to more and less.
- Try some activities from the NRICH website for EYFS to encourage depth - [www.nrich.maths.org](http://www.nrich.maths.org) (please be mindful that we will be using some of these in school)

Ask questions such as "How many more?", "How many altogether?", "How many would I have if..."