



Dice, Cards and Math

Dice and playing cards are inexpensive, fun to work with and suitable for a variety of math activities. They help children learn one-to-one correspondence (pointing to objects while counting), comparison of numbers (more/less/the same) and other math skills.

Dice can be used in very simple ways, such as by players rolling a single die and advancing on a game board. Such games often can be purchased second hand or created by families at home.

A piece of cardboard or posterboard can serve as a gameboard. A child can select a starting and ending place for the game. For example, for a game called "Going to the Park", *HOME* could be the starting place and *PARK* could be the destination. Your child could draw, alone or with help, boxes on streets leading from home to the park. Use dice or numbered cards to determine how many spaces to advance. Make up your own object and rules! A game of this kind promotes problem solving, number recognition and counting skills. Or, play commercial games with your children - look at the box to find out if the game is appropriate for your child's age group.

For older children, more advanced games can involve rolling two or more dice and adding (or subtracting) the numbers shown. Dice also can be used to help children look for number patterns and factors by finding all the ways to make a certain number on a pair of dice. Let your children make up their own dice games!

Dice do not need to be six sided. Game and hobby stores sell dice with 4, 8, 10, 12, 20 and even 100 sides! For dice and card game ideas that build math skills, look for "Box Cars and One Eyed Jacks". There is a complete set of these books and they are a wonderful resource.

Playing card games, too, offer many possibilities for math skill development. Children can play "War" or other games that involve a comparison between two or more numbers. They can count decks to determine how many cards are red, how many are hearts, how many are face cards, how many are less than 7, and so on. Such games and others like "Rummy" or "Go Fish" teach children about grouping and sorting. For other card game ideas, check the library for books on the subject...

Families can also create their own card games. If your family invents a game that is fun, we'd love to hear about it!

Letter borrowed from Tracy Fulton, New Westminster School District