



Sorting Stuff

Children learn many math skills long before they are ready for the "basics" of addition and subtraction. One of these skills is the ability to sort objects.

When they sort, children group things that belong together in some way. Children often sort by color - red blocks in one group, blue blocks in another - or by shape - triangle blocks here, rectangle blocks there.

When children's rooms are organized, their toys become natural objects to sort. At cleanup time, alphabet blocks go into one container, colored blocks go into another, farm animal figures go in one tub and toy cars into a box.

In helping with the laundry, children can sort clothes into piles of shirts, shorts, pants, underwear and socks. After dishes are done, children can put away knives, forks and spoons. In helping to put away groceries, children can separate boxes from cans or bathroom items from kitchen items. By lending a hand in sorting things into the appropriate recycling containers, children also develop earth-friendly habits.

Early in a child's explorations of sorting activities, adults play a useful role by providing words for what the child is doing ("I see you are putting all the square blocks together"). We also can help extend the sorting ("Let's see if we can find all the rectangle blocks"). In time the child begins to use these words and expand his or her understanding of the mathematical world.

Letter borrowed from Tracy Fulton, New Westminster School District

