

Oral and Mental Maths

Oral and Mental Maths should be quick, snappy, fun and a daily activity. It should last no longer than 10 minutes.

Counting stick

- Counting forwards to 5. Count backwards from 5. The teacher may use a puppet on their hand.
- When the children are ready, count from 1 to 10 and then count backwards.
- Count forwards to 3 then count backwards. Repeat, counting forwards to different numbers, then reverse direction.
- The teacher places their hand on 2 and asks the children what number they are at? This is repeated with different places on the stick and the children are asked then what number your hand is on.
- Teach the children to count backwards when the number is greater than 5 or 6.

Number fans

- Model to the children how to spread out the fan. The 1 must be to the left as you look at the spread. When the fan has been spread out, count from 1 to 10.
- The teacher then models how to hide a number, e.g. hide number 2, by allowing all the fans to drop down except 2, which is held to his/her chest. The teacher then asks the children to show the number. So the instructions would be: 'Hide the number 2' (the teacher watches to see who has found it). 'Now show teacher the number 2.' This is an excellent way to assess who recognises the numbers. Continue to do this with other numbers 1 to 5 at first, then move on to 1 to 10.
- Ask the children to show the number that comes before 5 and after 3.
- When the children are proficient at before and after, ask them to show the number that is 2 more than 4, 2 less than 7. Repeat with other numbers. If the children are competent, you could ask for 3 more than/greater than or 3 less than.
- Problem solving: Create simple number stories for the children. They can show the answer on the fans. For example:
 1. Granny gave me 2 sweets and Mammy gave me 2 sweets. How many sweets have I altogether?
 2. There are 3 girls in my group and 2 boys. How many children are there altogether?
 3. What age are you now? What age will you be in Senior Infants/1st class, etc. Create similar problems, differentiating the questions for more or less able children.
- The fans can also be used for questions on shapes. How many sides on a triangle/square?

Other resources that can be used for this activity are digit cards.

The sound of number

Resources needed: Tin box, cubes.

Instructions:

1. Ask the children to close their eyes and listen to the cubes being dropped into the box by the teacher. The children count the drops and the teacher then says, 'Eyes open.' The teacher then questions the children about how many drops they heard. 'How many drops did you hear? How many are in the tin?'
2. When the children are proficient at the first stage, make a set of drops and ask the children how many they heard. Hold that number in your head. The children then close their eyes again and you continue to make more drops. Ask how many are in the tin now?

- The teacher tells the children to close their eyes.
- The teacher drops in 3 cubes.
- The teacher tells the children to open their eyes and asks them how many drops they heard?
- The children answer 3.
- The teacher tells the children to hold that number because more are going to be added.
- The teacher adds 2 more.
- The teacher asks the children how many more have been dropped in? (2)
- How many were in the tin? (3 and 2 more)
- How many are in the tin altogether? (5)
- Repeat this with different numbers, differentiating for the different abilities in the class.

For subtraction, make the number of drops required, then ask the children how many drops they have heard? The children close their eyes again and the teacher takes some out. 'Open your eyes. Did you hear any more drops? While you had your eyes closed I took some out. How many did I take out? How many are left?'

- The teacher tells the children to close their eyes.
- The teacher drops in 4 cubes.
- The teacher tells the children to open their eyes and asks them how many drops they heard? (4)
- The teacher tells the children to hold that number and close their eyes again.
- The teacher takes out 1.
- The children open their eyes and the teacher asks if they heard any drops? (no) The teacher then asks the children what has been done? (the teacher took out 1)
- The teacher asks the children how many cubes are in the tin now? (3)
- The teacher can check and count with the children.

Human number line

Resources needed: A4-sized numbers from 1 to 10.

- The teacher distributes the digit cards to 10 children.
- The teacher asks the child with the number 1 to stand, so that the number 1 will be on the left.
- The teacher asks the children which number comes next? (2) This is repeated until the children are in numerical order.
- The teacher and children count forwards and backwards.
- The teacher asks the children who are still seated to change places with those standing, one by one.

For example:

1. The teacher says to child 1. 'Change places with the number 5.' Then, repeat with other numbers until all the children have changed places.
2. The teacher says to child 1. 'Change places with one more than 4.' Then, repeat with different numbers.
3. The teacher says to child 1. 'Change places with 1 less than 5.' Then, repeat with 2 more than, 2 less than, etc.

Teddy bear target boards

Target boards 1, 2 and 3 suitable for Junior Infants. See the target board section for list of questions.