Wondermaths - Let Me Try

How Kids Understand

Ten & Numbers to 20

A simple guide for parents of children about 4–7



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A calm reading guide

How to use this book



01 **Read a page**
Read the short page. Look at the picture together.

02 **Play for 2–5 min**
Choose one Try this idea with things you already have.

03 **Come back tomorrow**
Come back to the same number another day.

Stop whenever your child is done. You do not need to finish a page.

One idea to carry through the book

The big idea



Counting to 20 is not the same as understanding each number. Fourteen means one group of ten and four more.



Says the words

The child says a string of number words.

Builds the amount

The child makes 14 as a ten and four.

Skills can grow side by side

One path, many ways



These skills may grow side by side. Use the path to choose play—not to grade your child.

1. **Says numbers**
2. **Counts each thing**
3. **Knows how many**
4. **Makes an amount**

A path, not a report card

One path, many ways



5 Sees parts

6 Knows ten

7 Ten and more

Use the path to choose play - not to grade your child. A skill may appear, fade, and return.

One thing, one number word



One move. One number.

You'll notice

Each thing gets one number word. Your child may skip a block or count it twice.

Practice 1 of 12

Try it together



Try this

Move five LEGO blocks into a cup, counting each move. Or set out five cups and add one penny to each.

Avoid

Rushing, or moving the items while your child counts.

Say it

“Move one. Say one number.”

The last number tells how many



5 altogether

You'll notice

After counting each thing once, the last number tells the whole amount. Your child may count again when asked, "How many?"

Try it together



Try this

Count five LEGO blocks. Circle the group with your hands and say, “Five altogether.” Later, ask for five Cheerios from a larger serving.

Avoid

Banning a recount, or judging understanding from one answer.

Say it

“Five altogether. Can you give me five?”

A new layout, the same amount



6, however you arrange them

You'll notice

Moving things apart does not change how many there are. Count the coins; dimes are coins, not cents.

Try it together



Try this

Count six dimes. Spread them out and count again. Then arrange six Cheerios in a row, the same six in a circle, and check.

Avoid

Adding or removing things, or expecting an answer without a check.

Say it

“Did we add any? Let’s check.”

Five and a little more



5 + 2 = 7

You'll notice

A familiar group of five can help your child see the parts inside a larger number. With seven, they may still count from one.

Practice 4 of 12

Try it together



Try this

Show three Cheerios and ask what your child sees. Then hold up five fingers on one hand and two on the other; rebuild the groups with blocks.

Avoid

A speed contest, or expecting instant recognition of seven.

Say it

“I see five and two more. What do you see?”

Ten has a special space



Two rows of five

You'll notice

Two rows of five show a full ten and the empty places. Your child may count every object even when only one space is empty.

Practice 5 of 12

Try it together



Try this

Cover the last two spots of a 12-egg carton so two rows of five remain. Fill them with LEGO. Then start with eight filled spaces and add until ten.

Avoid

Calling twelve spaces a ten, or asking for a quick answer.

Say it

“There are ten spaces. How many more will fill it?”

Ten is one package



One group. Ten things.

You'll notice

One package of ten still holds ten separate things. Your child may say "one" for the package but not yet show what is inside.

Practice 6 of 12

Try it together



Try this

Build a tower from ten matching LEGO blocks. Take it apart and join it again. Trade the tower for ten loose blocks, then trade back.

Avoid

Calling the package one block, or stopping your child from opening it.

Say it

“One group of ten. Ten blocks are still here.”

Ten and four make fourteen



10 + 4 = 14

You'll notice

Numbers from 11 to 19 can be built from one ten and some single things. Your child may know "fourteen" but still count all fourteen blocks.

Try it together



Try this

Add four loose LEGO blocks to a ten-block tower. Show ten fingers and let your child add four more. Then change the extra number.

Avoid

Counting the package as one item, or hiding what is inside it.

Say it

“Ten and four more. That’s fourteen.”

The English name hides the ten



14: one ten, four ones

You'll notice

Eleven to nineteen do not say "ten and..." clearly. "Fourteen" starts with "four," but we write 14.

Try it together



Try this

Place ten blocks and four loose blocks beside the card 14. Point to the 1 and the 4. Then say “eleven” or “twelve” and let your child build it.

Avoid

Treating every mix-up as a language problem, or replacing everyday number names.

Say it

“Fourteen: ten and four. Show me the ten.”

Count on from five



5 … 6, 7

You'll notice

When adding, your child can start with a known number and name only the new things. They may still count everything from the start.

Try it together



Try this

Count five LEGO blocks. Add two and say, “six, seven.” Or put a token on 8 of a straight board and move it two spaces, naming nine and ten.

Avoid

Forbidding a start from one, or counting the starting space as the first move.

Say it

“We have five. Six, seven—two more.”

Two tens make twenty



19 + 1 = 20

You'll notice

Twenty is two full groups of ten. Your child may stop at nineteen or keep counting all twenty things one by one.

Try it together



Try this

Fill two prepared ten-spot cartons. At nineteen, add the final block. Then place cards 18, 19, and 20 in a row and move a block along them.

Avoid

Requiring counting by tens, or skipping the moment the second ten fills.

Say it

“Nineteen. One more makes twenty.”

The same number, different things



14, shown another way

You'll notice

Showing a number in more than one way tells you more than copying one pattern. Your child may know fourteen in a carton but get confused by loose objects.

Try it together



Try this

Build fourteen with LEGO as ten and four. Rebuild it with pennies. Then let your child draw the groups and match them to card 14.

Avoid

Changing the number, material, and request all at once.

Say it

“Can you show fourteen another way? Where is the ten?”

Help, then hand back a turn



Pause. Show. Hand back.

You'll notice

Give your child time. Show one helpful move. Then let them try the next move alone.

Practice 12 of 12

Try it together



Try this

Your child chooses fingers or LEGO to show six; wait and listen. Then swap roles: your child asks you for four things and shows you how to check.

Avoid

Saying “You already know this,” or finishing every task for your child.

Say it

“Show me your way. We can stop.”

Two quick distinctions

Myths and facts



MYTH

“Counting to 20 means understanding 20.”

FACT

Saying number words and making an amount are different skills.

MYTH

“A recount means no understanding.”

FACT

A recount alone does not show what a child understands.

Two quick distinctions

Myths and facts



MYTH

“Fingers are a bad habit.”

FACT

Fingers can help show an amount and track what is added.

MYTH

“A full carton proves they know ten.”

FACT

A child can copy the layout without yet knowing a package of ten.

Keep observing

More myths, more useful facts



MYTH

“Writing 41 instead of 14 explains everything.”

FACT

One answer does not explain why a mix-up happened.

MYTH

“Every child follows the same steps.”

FACT

Skills may develop in different orders and at different rates.

Keep observing

More myths, more useful facts



MYTH

“There is one best tool.”

FACT

What matters is what the child understands with the tool.

MYTH

“A fast answer means full understanding.”

FACT

Speed alone does not show whether a child can build and explain a number.

Observe the method, not a score

Quick home check



Pick one or two. Allow recounts, pointing, and fingers. Note the way your child works—not a score.

01 **ASK YOUR CHILD TO...**

Count six LEGO blocks. Notice how they keep track.

02 **ASK YOUR CHILD TO...**

Give you five Cheerios from a larger serving.

Observe the method, not a score

Quick home check



Pick one or two. Allow recounts, pointing, and fingers. Note the way your child works—not a score.

03 ASK YOUR CHILD TO...

Say how many the same six blocks are after you spread them out.

04 ASK YOUR CHILD TO...

Show seven with fingers or blocks. Ask what parts they see.

Observe the method, not a score

More ways to check

Pick one or two. Allow recounts, pointing, and fingers. Note the way your child works—not a score.

05 ASK YOUR CHILD TO...

Make a group of ten, then open it and talk about the blocks.

06 ASK YOUR CHILD TO...

Show 14 as a ten and four more. Point to the digits in 14.

Quick reminder 1 of 2

Fridge sheet

Keep the amount steady. Let your child check. Build the ten first.



1. Move one thing; say one number.
2. After the last number, say the whole amount.
3. Spread things out, then check.
4. Look for five and some more.

Quick reminder 2 of 2

Fridge sheet



5 Ten spots: two rows of five.

6 A package of ten still holds ten.

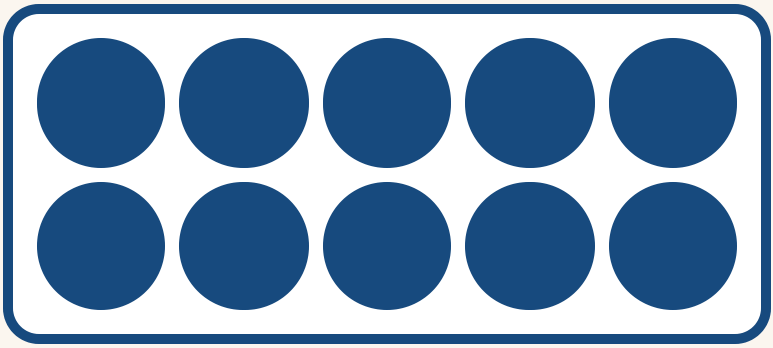
7 For 14: one ten and four more.

8 Help with one move, then wait.

Reference aid - phone reading

Egg-carton ten-frame

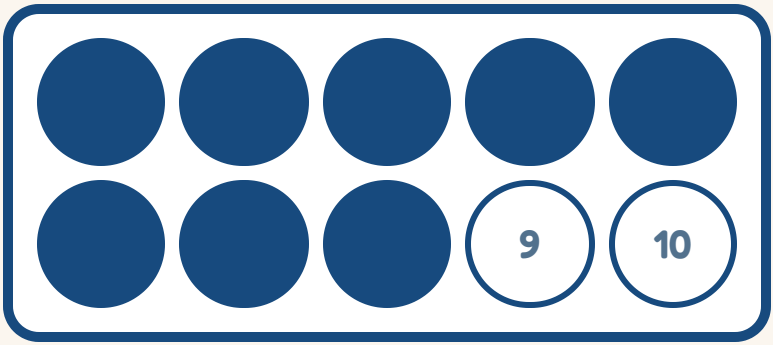
Look at these numbers together. Use the US Letter edition for cut-out cards.



Ten spaces

Count the large circles. A full frame has two rows of five.

How many more?



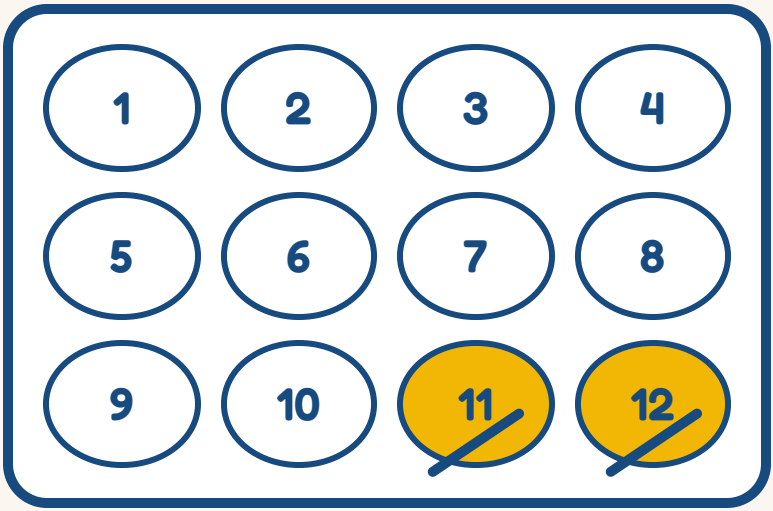
8 + 2 = 10

Start with eight filled spaces. Ask how many more fill the ten.



A twelve-space carton

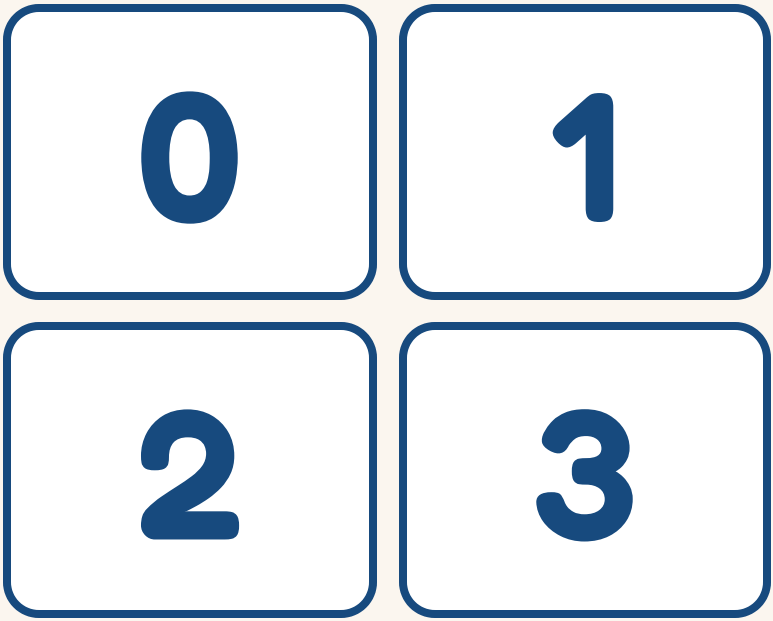
Keep a ten and mark the extra two



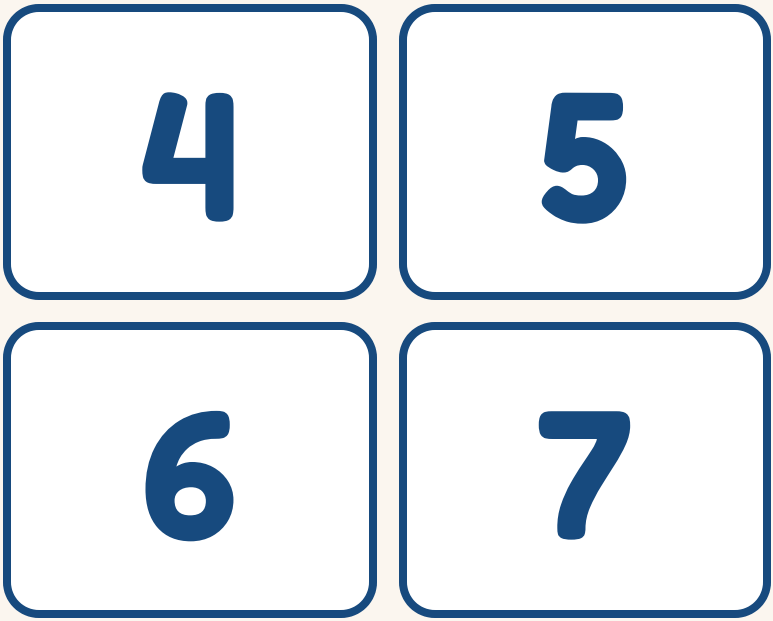
12 - 2 = 10

For the small twelve-spot carton, mark or cover the last two spots so two rows of five remain.

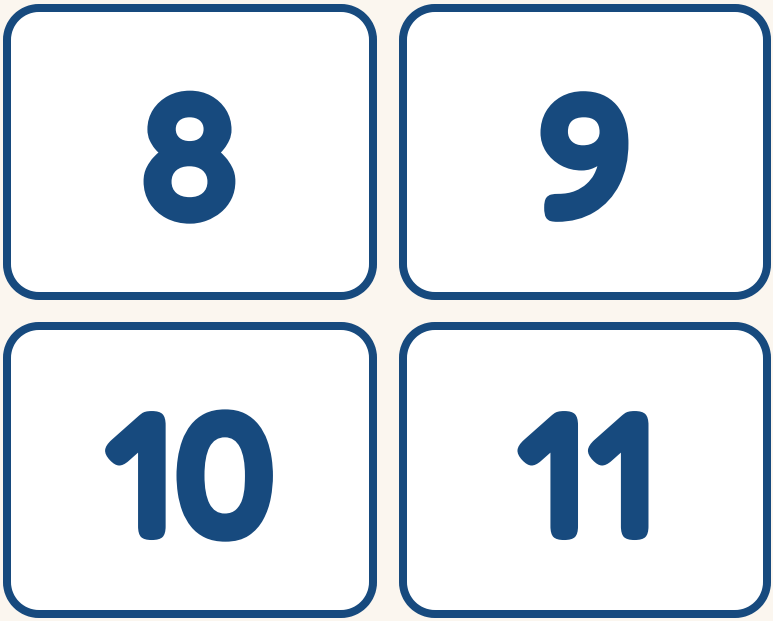
Number cards 0–3



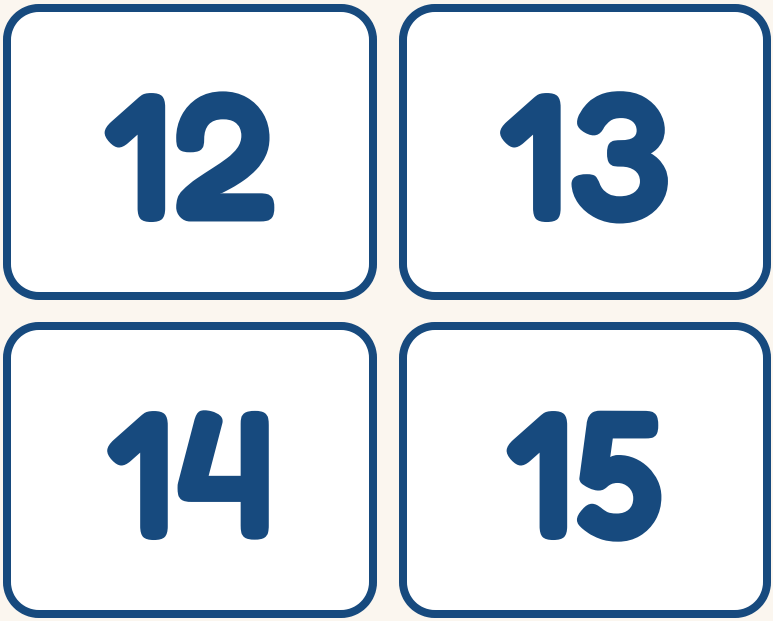
Number cards 4–7



Number cards 8–11



Number cards 12-15



Number cards 16-20

16

17

18

19

20

Reference aid - count on

10 + x cards

Show ten, then count on to the total.

10 + 1	= 11
10 + 2	= 12
10 + 3	= 13
10 + 4	= 14
10 + 5	= 15

Reference aid - count on

10 + x cards

Show ten, then count on to the total.

10 + 6	= 16
10 + 7	= 17
10 + 8	= 18
10 + 9	= 19

Board practice - start

Walk from 1 to 10

1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10



Count each new space after moving. Do not count the start as the first move.

Board practice - finish

Walk from 11 to 20

11	12
13	14
15	16
17	18
19	20



At nineteen, one more space reaches twenty. Stop there if a roll goes beyond.

Board rules

1–20 board



Roll, move, and count together.

Together

Use your own die and token. Start on 1. Roll, move one space for each dot on the die, and count the new spaces—not the start. Stop at 20. If you roll beyond 20, stop there.

Instead of jargon, say

Cardinality

The last number says how many altogether.

One-to-one matching

We count each thing once.

Subitizing

Seeing how many at a glance.

Part–whole thinking

Seeing five and two inside seven.

Instead of jargon, say

Composite unit

Ten as one package.

Ones

Single things.

Counting on

Counting from five instead of starting again.



Plain-language glossary 3 of 3

Instead of jargon, say

Place value

In 14, 1 means a ten and 4 means four singles.

Transfer

Showing the same amount with other things.

Ten-frame

Ten spots: two rows of five.

Jargon belongs here so you can translate it - not on the activity pages.

Sources

01 Sarnecka, B. W., & Carey, S. (2008). How counting represents number: What children must learn and when they learn it.

02 Ho, C. S.-H., & Fuson, K. C. (1998). Children's Knowledge of Teen Quantities as Tens and Ones: Comparisons of Chinese, British, and American Kindergartners.

03 Kullberg, A., et al. (2020). Effects of learning addition and subtraction in preschool by making the first ten numbers and their relations visible with finger patterns.

Sources

01 Laski, E. V., et al. (2015). What Makes Mathematics Manipulatives Effective? Lessons From Cognitive Science and Montessori Education.

02 Frye, D., et al.; IES/WWC (2013). Teaching Math to Young Children.

Scope

Adapted from the supplied pre-ebook. These references come from its supplied source list. The primary papers were not independently read for this edition.