Trailside Math Adventures

5 playful math adventures



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DAY 1

Spoon parade

GATHER

5 spoons.

PLAY TOGETHER

Line up five spoons. Count together as you point to each one. Hide one under a towel. How many can you see?

WONDER

Ask: How did you know four were left? Can you show me another way?

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Four are visible; one is hidden.

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DAY 2

Sock pairs

GATHER

6 socks.

PLAY TOGETHER

Mix up six socks. Make three pairs, with two socks in each pair. Count the pairs and the socks.

WONDER

Ask: How did you count the socks? Is there another way to group them?

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Three pairs hold six socks.

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DAY 3

Cereal picnic

GATHER

7 pieces of cereal.

PLAY TOGETHER

Give a pretend bear three pieces and a bunny four. Which has more? Put the groups together and count.

WONDER

Ask: How did you see the seven? Can you make the two groups a different way?

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Four is one more than three; together there are seven.

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DAY 4

Block path

GATHER

6 blocks in two colors.

PLAY TOGETHER

Make a path: red, blue, red, blue. Ask what color comes next. Continue with two more blocks. You can use two shapes or textures instead of colors.

WONDER

Ask: What makes the pattern work? Can you start a new pattern of your own?

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Red comes next, then blue. Any two distinct colors work.

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DAY 5

Treasure towers

GATHER

8 blocks.

PLAY TOGETHER

Build one tower of five blocks and another of three. Which has more blocks? How many more blocks does it have?

WONDER

Ask: How did you know which tower had more? Can you prove it another way?

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

The five-block tower has two more blocks.

FOR GROWN-UPS

Choose one adventure a day, or repeat a favorite — you can play without printing. Gather the objects, count together, and ask “How did you see that?” Give your child time to think, and stop whenever you like.

Make it easier with fewer objects, or stretch with more, and supervise small objects, using larger alternatives when needed. These playful activities supplement, rather than replace, a curriculum.

What you will need across the five days: spoons, socks, cereal or large counters, two colors of blocks, and a towel.

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