

Writing Numerals

✓ **Quick Description:** Ideas for introducing numerals: 1, 2, 3,... (Adapted from Building Blocks)

Activity

Reading numerals is a language arts skill (children match, then recognize, then name, or read, them).

Familiarity and interest in numerals is a significant predictor of math abilities.

Matching numerals to quantities includes math competencies.

Tips for introducing the single digits, 1 to 10, are included below.

Once digits are introduced, the best application of numerals is meaningfully embedding them in learning trajectories for number and operations.

For all numerals, consider the following.

- Use a favorite number book that features large numerals. Point to the numeral and have children read it with you. Subitize or count the objects on the page and discuss that the number of things matches that numeral.
- Model and discuss how that numeral is *formed*. Such action plans help children name and eventually write the numerals. Have children practice “writing it in the air” as you repeat the action plan. If you wish, use locations in the classroom to make “left” and “right” concrete (see “Notes”).

The following are directions for writing numerals this way:



- 1 – Start at the top, then go straight down.
- 2 – Curves from the left up and then curves back to the bottom, connecting to a straight, left-to-right horizontal line. Some like to say it’s duck’s head, then tail.
- 3 – Two curved parts on top of each other. You might use this rhyme: “Around the tree and around the tree—3, 3, 3.”
- 4 – Three straight lines, two shorter—one up-to-down (vertical), another left-to-right (horizontal). You might use this rhyme: “Down, stop! Over and down some more—four, four, four.”
- 5 – Starting at the top, it drops straight down part way, curves out like a sideways letter u, and ends with a side-to-side line back at the top. You might use this rhyme: “A short little line and a big round tummy—don’t forget its hat. 5 is funny!”

Materials

- ✓ Large numerals
- ✓ Counting books with numerals
- ✓ White board, chalkboard, or chart

Notes

The word *numerals* means “written numbers,” such as 1 and 4. These symbols can also be written as number words (one and four). An actual number is the idea of, for example, four things. We might use the word numerals when reading or writing them, but we do not insist that children do so.

To recognize and write a numeral, children need to know its parts, how the parts fit together, and left and right. For example, 3 has two curves, one on top of the other, and the curves start on the left. Most children this age do not know left and right so the concepts have to be communicated in child-friendly, age-appropriate ways, such as temporarily referring to the “window side” of the board as the right or left, whichever is the case in your classroom.

6 – Slants down to the left and then continues up into a loop. You may wish to use this rhyme: “Curve down and then around ‘til it sticks. That’s how you write the numeral 6.”

7 – Two straight parts; at the top from the left is a straight line across and from the end of that line down is a slanted line to the bottom. “Make a straight line to your friend. Down the slide and that’s the end.”

8 – Looks like two circles, one on top of the other. You can start writing the capital letter S, and then curve back to the start. “Make an S, then don’t stop. Draw a curve up to the top.”

9 – Its parts are a small circle on top and an up-and-down (vertical) line. You may need to clarify right and left with any strategy you find useful, such as “Start on the side where my desk is.” Use this rhyme if you would like: “A circle on top and a straight down line. 9 is fine!”

0 – An oval. “Zero, zero, nothing to it. Curvy oval, that will do it.”

10 – A 1 (ten) and 0 (no other singles). “One comes first...and zero then. That’s how you make a ten.”

Formative Assessment

For children needing additional support:

- Take more time on each numeral; don’t rush. Consistent experiences are key.
- Spend more time on numerals that are challenging. Incorporate them into routines and math games such as “Number Jump.”
- Children practice forming numerals out of dough (or clay).

For children needing more of a challenge:

- Write and read very large numerals, such as 100, and have fun saying them!