

This week has a focus on maths. For babies and younger toddlers, we have details about treasure baskets and heuristic play, ways for a baby to explore objects and build up skills that when they are older they will use for learning about shapes and numbers!

**Daily creative downloadable activities:**

If our weekly challenges aren't enough, this website gives you a daily challenge! <https://www.boromi.co.uk/dailyplay>

**Keeping safe online:**

Last week the Home Office published [guidance for parents and carers to keep children safe online](#), which you might find helpful to read through.

**Weekly Challenge #5**

**0-2s:** Can you set up and explore your own basket for 'Heuristic Play'?

**2-5s:** Can you use your maths skills to follow a recipe and do some baking?

**Heuristic play (0-2s):**

Treasure baskets and heuristic play are used in our baby room to give babies and toddlers opportunities to explore everyday objects. The idea for both, is to create a special box or basket of objects that stimulate different senses. This is different from toys, which are usually designed for a particular purpose, and if they are plastic, less stimulating to different senses.

The basket can include wooden objects (spoons, clothes pegs, wooden egg cup); metal objects (whisk, bunches of keys, different size spoons), natural objects (pine cones, feathers, large pebbles, lemon) and different textured objects (different fabrics, ribbon, tin foil, sandpaper), shiny objects (small handheld mirror) etc!

(Safety note - babies explore with their mouths - all objects must be clean, not breakable and not choking hazards).

Treasure basket play should be closely supervised by an adult at all times.

- 1) Collect objects for your basket
- 2) Create a clear floor space with cushions for support if needed
- 3) Adult sits nearby but does not intervene or take part in the play, just observes. (Unless your baby needs your attention!)
- 4) Let your baby pick up and examine the objects, watch how they explore them.

Put the basket of objects away at the end of the session so it is available at all times, this keeps it special. Try to make time for your baby to play with the objects every day!

Once babies are more mobile, crawling or walking, the concept of heuristic play is similar, but objects such as stacking cardboard boxes, comparing different sizes of similar objects will maintain their fascination for longer.

For more details see:

<https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/home-learning-a-parent-s-guide-to-treasure-basket-and-heuristic-play>

**Baking (1-5s)**

Preparing food, cooking, baking and eating food are all excellent chance to use maths in everyday life, as well as learning about how things change when mixed together or heated up. Even simple things like making a snack of cut up fruit provides a chance to check - 'how many people are eating'/'how many plates do we need'/'how shall we share the fruit?'. Baking gives the chance to measure ingredients such as flour by weighing or measuring, as well as counting 'how many spoonfuls' etc and experiencing what 'more' feels like!

Here are some recipes to start you off, but try whatever you like, as simple or difficult as you want!

<https://www.playlikemum.com/10-simple-recipes-to-introduce-your-toddler-to-baking/>

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/toddler-recipe-easy-homemade-pizza-veggie-faces>

### **Early maths and number skills**

For all under 5s, at nursery all learning about numbers and maths is done through fun practical experiences and games. Having a very good understanding of what numbers mean is very important before being able to read and write numbers, let alone start doing written sums (this is not expected within the Early Years Foundation Stage even by the end of Reception year when a child is 5 or 6).

*Top tips for supporting maths development:*

- Notice when your child uses number or maths language in everyday life, repeat it and extend it - eg 'more'. 'Yes, one more, that's right. Now there's 1, 2, 3! 3 dogs!'
- Some children enjoy reciting numbers in order (partly as it often gets a positive reaction from impressed adults!), but it is also important (and usually harder!) for children to understand how counting relates to real objects - practising counting actions 'let's do 5 jumps/3 claps' as well as objects 'let's count the teddies together'.
- Don't ask too many direct questions as this can feel like a lot of pressure - phrases like 'I wonder how many...' are sometimes better, your child has the choice to answer or not, and often they choose to!
- Maths is lots about spotting patterns, recognising shapes, and starting to think about measuring and comparing size as well about numbers.

### **Other online maths resources**

[www.topmarks.co.uk/](http://www.topmarks.co.uk/) - TopMarks (select 'early years' for games around pattern and number).

'Bee Bot' (App for phones/tablets) – Bee Bot computing app (programming very simple instructions to get the bug through the mazes).

[www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/numberblocks](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/numberblocks) - Cbeebies Numberblocks