

C8: Word Count

Lesson Objective: Using manipulatives as visual aids, children will hear spoken sentences, use a counter to represent each word of the sentence, and count the number of words in the sentence.

Materials

For this activity you will need several blocks, checkers, paper squares, or any type of counters, preferably in ONE color.

You will also need a list of short sentences made up of one-syllable words. Here are some examples:

Two Words

- Jim runs.
- Dogs bark.
- She laughed.
- Mom drives.
- Dad cooks.

Three Words

- Mark plays drums.
- Cats are cute.
- Toys are fun.
- Jane ran home.
- We eat lunch.

Four Words

- We played a game.
- The boys wore caps.
- It rained a lot.
- She saw her mom.
- I like to read.

(continued)

Activity

Video: How to play Word Count

Explain to your child that each counter stands for one word. Say a brief, simple sentence to your child: for example, “Jim runs.” Speak very clearly, being sure to pause after each word. Tell her that she will make a line of counters for the sentence, one counter for each word.

Adult: Each one of these counters stands for one word.

I am going to say a sentence two times.

The first time I will say “Listen,” and
you will listen very carefully.

Then I will say “Listen and count,” and you will put down
one counter for every word I say.

You can then proceed to introduce the sentence. The “Listen” and “Listen and count” commands let her know to focus her attention on what you say next. This will help the activity go smoothly.

Adult: Let’s begin. Listen: Jim runs.

Listen and count: Jim runs.

[Child should put out two counters.] Adult: Now
say it with me as you point

to the counter for each word.

Child: [with Adult] Jim – runs.

Adult: Listen: Mark plays drums.

Listen and count: Mark plays drums.

[Child should put out three counters.]

Adult: Now say it with me as you point

to the counter for each word.

Child: [with Adult] Mark – plays – drums.

(continued)

Start out with short sentences of just two or three one-syllable words, then gradually increase the length of your sentences. A sentence composed of six or seven one-syllable words is typical for four- or five-year-old children. The purpose of this activity is to focus the child on the idea that sentences are composed of words, not to stretch her rote memory!

NOTE: Have your child line up the counters from left to right, to mimic how we read words and sentences from left to right. Teach her to leave a little space between counters, to mimic the space between written words and to keep her from skipping or double-counting as she counts.

Small Groups (2-5 children)

Additional Materials:

- optional: tray or placemat

Adaptation: Read the main activity, watch the video, and follow the instructions above, with the following changes:

Give each child several red and blue squares. Ask the children to make a stack of red squares and a stack of blue squares.

Let the children choose five of the same color counters (five blue teddy bears, five pennies, etc.). A tray or placemat helps define the space and keeps the counters together.

It can be helpful to use a work surface (paper, box top, etc.) with pre-marked areas in which children can place their counters for each sentence if they need help keeping them neat and in order.

Read from the sentence list or create new 2-3 word sentences using the children's names. Follow the directions above.