



Activity Ideas

Jack the Builder

Counting On

Level 1 Ages 3+

Stuart J. Murphy
MathStart®

**“Storybooks that make
math fun!”**

Counting on is a strategy to help young children understand how to solve addition problems.

Jack’s blocks come in all colors and shapes (square, rectangle, cylinders, cones). In Jack’s imagination, an arrangement of just two blocks is a robot. Add one more block and presto! It’s a hot dog stand at the circus. Add two more blocks for a total of five and it’s a ferryboat! Jack counts on more and more blocks until he has a super-duper, ready-for-lift-off rocket ship. Blast off! All the blocks fall down and it’s time for Jack to start over again. Illustrated by Michael Rex.

DC Standard 4.1, Number Concepts:

Children will demonstrate a beginning understanding of number and operations and how they relate to one another: (4.1.3) Using numbers to tell how many; (4.1.4) Using numbers and counting as a means to solve problems.

- Create your own “Jack the Builder” fun as you play together with your students. Start with three blocks. What does it look like? Ask one of the children to add on two more blocks to make a new shape. What does it look like? Count on together as a group: “3 blocks, plus 1 block, plus 1 block= 5 blocks.” Now add three more blocks for a total of 8 blocks. Continue until the blocks fall down!
- Draw a number line from 1 to 20 on the board so everyone can see. Say a number and have one of the children put his finger on that number. For example, “5.” Then count on 2 more together and have him put his finger on “7.” Continue up to 20, adding 2, 3, 4 or 5 by counting on. You can also say the number and point to it yourself on the number line, and have the kids count on out loud together.
- Start with 25 small objects. For example, pennies or buttons. Put 1 object in a jar or small plastic container. Roll a die. Add on whatever number comes up, 1 through 6, until all the objects are in the jar. If, on your last roll, you do not have enough objects, note how many more you would need (for example, if you roll a “5” but only have 3 objects, you would need 2 more). Also, after each round, note the sum (4 buttons + 1 button + 1 button+ 1 button = 7 buttons). As a variation, put a piece of yarn or string on a table to create two columns. Put one object on one side and all the rest on the other. Roll the die and play the game by having the children count on and move objects from one column to the other.

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