Number Bonds to 10: Playful Pairs That Make Maths Feel Friendly

Key points

- A number bond is a pair of numbers that add together to make another number, such as 3 and 7 make 10, and knowing these pairs helps children with many maths skills.
- The pairs that add to 10 are 0 and 10, 1 and 9, 2 and 8, 3 and 7, 4 and 6, and 5 and 5, and they are the building blocks for counting on, adding and taking away.
- Children learn these pairs best through objects, pictures and songs, so they can see and feel that 6 and 4 make 10 before they simply remember it.
- A ten frame is a grid of 10 squares arranged in two rows of five, which helps children see how many more are needed to make 10.
- A part-whole diagram shows a whole number split into two parts, so a child can see that 10 can be split into 7 and 3 in more than one way.
- Short, relaxed practice little and often works better than long sessions, and children learn at different speeds, so there is no need to compare them with others.

Things to try at home

- Use five or ten small objects, such as pasta shapes or coins, and split them into two groups in your hands, then ask your child how many are in each group and how many altogether.
- Make a ten frame on paper by drawing two rows of five squares, and let your child fill it with counters, buttons or dried beans, noticing how many squares are still empty.
- Sing counting songs or rhymes together while clapping or tapping, and pause to ask the child what goes with a number to make ten.
- Use the fingers on both hands as a playful tool: hold up a few fingers, then ask how many more would make ten, and talk about the pairs you see.
- Play a simple game of shops or picnics, where you share ten cakes or biscuits between two plates, and talk about the different ways they could be shared.

Find out more

- The National curriculum in England: mathematics programmes of study on GOV.UK sets out what children are expected to learn in Year 1, including number bonds, and is at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework on GOV.UK describes the early maths learning that children in Reception are working towards, and is at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2
- Your child's class teacher or Reception teacher can tell you how the school introduces number bonds, which may vary between schools, and which games and methods they use in class.