

Teen Numbers: Why 'Ten and a Bit More' Matters

Key points

- Teen numbers (11 to 19) are all built the same way: a full group of ten, plus a few more ones — so 14 is 'ten and four more'.
- English number words for the teens don't always show this clearly, which is one reason children can find them trickier than counting to 10.
- It's very common for children in Reception (the first year of primary school in England, for four- and five-year-olds) to muddle or reorder teen numbers at first — this is a normal part of learning, not a sign of a problem.
- Seeing ten objects grouped together, with a few extra next to them, helps children picture what a teen number actually means.
- This idea builds naturally on counting and grouping within 10, so it tends to click once a child is already confident with smaller numbers.
- There's no need for formal explanations at this age — the aim is just a relaxed, playful sense that teen numbers are 'ten, and then some more'.

Things to try at home

- Count ten small objects (buttons, pasta, toy bricks) into one group, then add a few more one at a time, saying 'ten and one, that's eleven... ten and two, that's twelve' together.
- Use a ten-frame if your child's school sends one home — this is just a simple grid of ten boxes used to show numbers clearly. Fill all ten boxes, then add extra objects alongside and count the total.
- Hold up both hands (ten fingers), then ask your child to hold up a few more fingers of their own, counting on together from ten.
- Spot teen numbers in everyday life — a house number, a page in a book, a number on a bus — and say them together as 'ten and some more'.
- Line up ten socks, shoes or toy cars, then add a few extra one by one, counting on each time.

Find out more

- Your child's teacher — ask how teen numbers are taught in class and whether they use ten-frames or similar resources, as approaches can vary between schools.
- GOV.UK — the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets out the official early learning goals for maths in Reception.
- GOV.UK — the national curriculum pages give the wider picture of maths expectations as children move from Reception into Year 1.