

Part-whole mats for 5, 6 and 7

This set of three part-whole mats (with 5, 6 and 7 as the whole) helps children see that a number is made of two smaller parts hiding inside it. Children place real objects or themselves into the two 'arms' of the mat and the 'whole' circle, building a hands-on picture of composition before any recording is expected.

How to use

- Carpet time: hold up the mat with 7 as the whole. Ask two children to each take a handful of pom-poms from a shared pot of 7, tip them into the two part circles, then say the whole fact together, for example '3 and 4 make 7'.
- Continuous provision: leave all three mats (5, 6 and 7 as the whole) on a tray with loose parts such as shells, buttons or conkers. Children self-select a mat and explore different ways to split the whole into two parts, with no expectation to write anything down.
- Small group adult-led session (composition of 5 and 6): give each child the 5-mat or the 6-mat and a matching number of double-sided counters. Children shake and scatter the counters onto the two part circles, then describe what they see, so the practitioner can check understanding without insisting on a single correct split.
- Composition of 7, every way (s3): set out the 7-mat alongside 7 identical objects, such as teddies. In pairs, children move teddies between the two parts, physically showing each way to make 7, including 0 and 7, 1 and 6, 2 and 5, and 3 and 4.
- Number bonds to 7, including zero and take-away (s4): use the 7-mat with a bag or box as one 'part'. Start with 7 objects in the whole, hide some in the box, and ask how many are left in view, linking to facts such as 7 and 0 make 7 and 6 and 1 make 7.
- Outdoor version: chalk a giant part-whole mat on the playground with 7 as the whole. Children walk, hop or wheel themselves and friends into the two parts, making the composition of 7 with their whole bodies.
- Supporting SEND and children learning English: use the mats with real objects rather than pictures or numerals at first, pair children so they can point and copy, and keep the language simple and repeated, such as 'part, part, whole', so the pattern becomes familiar.
- Role play link: place a 5-mat, 6-mat or 7-mat in the mark-making or small-world area with toy animals, so children can keep exploring part-whole thinking independently once the adult-led session has ended.





