# Bridge to Ten: A Mental Maths Strategy for Year 2 Addition

A simple guide to the 'Bridge to Ten' strategy, a mental maths method that helps Year 2 children add numbers more easily by reaching ten first.

## What is 'Bridging to Ten'?

Bridging to ten is a mental maths strategy used in Year 2 (children aged 6 to 7). Instead of counting on one by one, children learn to 'bridge' to the nearest ten to make a calculation simpler. For example, if a child is adding 8 + 5, they don't just count forward five times. Instead, they think about how much more 8 needs to reach 10, and then add the rest. It is a way of breaking a problem into two smaller, easier steps. This method helps children move away from counting on their fingers and towards more confident mental arithmetic.

## How the strategy works

To use this method, children often use a ten-frame (a grid of ten squares) or a number line to visualise the jump. If the sum is 8 + 5, the child first asks, 'How many do I need to get to 10?' Since 8 needs 2 more, they take 2 away from the 5. This 'bridges' them to 10. Now the sum becomes 10 + 3, which is much easier to solve as 13. By splitting the second number, they create a friendly number (10) that makes the final answer clearer. This visual approach ensures they understand the logic rather than just memorising a rule.

## Why this matters for your child

By the end of Year 2, the National Curriculum (the official guide for what is taught in English schools) expects children to be able to add and subtract mentally. Bridging to ten is a core skill because it builds a strong foundation for later maths. It helps children understand place value—the idea that the position of a digit tells us its value—and prepares them for more complex methods, such as column addition, which they will use in later years. It gives children a reliable tool to solve problems quickly and accurately in their heads.

## Simple ways to help at home

You can support your child with short, playful activities during the day. While shopping or tidying up, you might ask, 'I have 7 buttons, how many more to make 10?' Once they are comfortable with that, try a 'bridge' challenge: 'If I have 7 and I add 5, let's jump to 10 first!' You can use coins, pasta shapes, or a hand-drawn number line to show the jump. Keep it light and fun; there is no need for drilling or pressure. If your child uses a different method, that is okay—just ask their teacher which strategy they are currently focusing on in class.

## Common questions

Parents often wonder if their child should stop counting on their fingers. While counting is a natural start, the goal in Year 2 is to move towards these mental strategies. You might also wonder if this is the only way to add; there are other methods, but bridging to ten is specifically highlighted in school guidance to help children handle larger numbers. If your child has SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

or is learning English as an additional language, using physical objects like blocks or beads can make this abstract concept much easier to grasp.

## Sources


- Department for Education, National Curriculum in England: Mathematics programmes of study
- GOV.UK, National Curriculum