Guess, Then Check: Helping Your Child with Estimation

Key points

- Estimation is making a sensible guess about 'roughly how many' objects there are without counting them one by one.
- It is different from subitising, which is when children in Reception (the first year of primary school) can instantly see very small amounts, like 3 or 4, without counting.
- Estimating helps children develop a feel for numbers and helps them spot if they have made a mistake when they eventually count the objects.
- In Year 1, children learn to use strategies like comparing a group of objects to a smaller group they already know.
- Every school may teach this slightly differently, so feel free to ask your child's teacher about the methods they use in class.

Things to try at home

- While shopping, ask your child to guess how many apples are in the bag before you put them away.
- Fill a small jar with buttons or pasta and ask your child to guess how many are inside before counting them together.
- Grab a handful of sweets or counters and see who can make the closest guess before checking the total.
- Look at a group of items on a shelf and ask, 'Do you think there are more than 10 or fewer than 10?'

Find out more

- Your child's class teacher
- The GOV.UK website for the National Curriculum in England