

Half or Not Half? Sharing Equally in Year 1

One half is one of two equal parts of a whole. This guide explains a proposed Education Makes Sense video and worksheet for Year 1, using paper shapes to explore why two pieces are not always halves. Try the ideas together gently, with time to look, fold and talk.

What it is

Half or Not Half? Sharing Equally in Year 1 is a proposed short video and original worksheet about halves. A fraction describes equal parts of a whole; one half is one of two equal parts. For a paper shape, each half contains the same amount of paper. Simply making two pieces is not enough if one contains more than the other.

The Department for Education's Year 1 maths programme includes recognising, finding and naming halves of shapes, objects and quantities. This activity focuses on paper shapes. Folding and comparing would give children something practical to explore, with everyday words such as 'whole', 'part' and 'equal'.

What happens

In the proposed video, a whole paper square would be folded so that its two parts fit exactly over each other. Opening it would reveal two equal parts: each is one half of the original square. Another example would show a fold that leaves one part clearly bigger, inviting children to discuss why these are not halves.

The worksheet would offer simple shapes with equal and unequal splits to sort or point to. An adult could ask, 'How could we check?' For these examples, folding or placing prepared pieces over each other would make comparison possible. These are suggested activities, rather than a lesson format required by official guidance.

What it means for your child

The central idea is that halves must be equal parts of the same whole. Your child could show their thinking by pointing, moving pieces or explaining what they notice. In this activity, the conversation matters more than producing a perfectly neat fold.

You can adapt how you explore together. For a child with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), you might offer larger shapes or prepare the pieces yourself. A child learning English could use gestures or discuss the idea in a familiar language alongside the English words. Ask their teacher which materials and ways of responding would fit the learning they are doing at school.

How you can help at home

Try a brief paper-folding game with a square or rectangle from spare paper. Fold it so the two parts match, then open it and look together. You could say, 'Here is the whole. These two parts are equal. Each part is half.' Next, make an uneven fold and ask what has changed.

Let your child choose a shape or guide your hands if folding is difficult. You could also share four large toy objects equally between two toy characters: each receives half of the collection. Keep it playful, stop when your child has had enough, and return another day if you wish.

Questions parents often ask

Does my child need to write $\frac{1}{2}$? The Year 1 fractions requirement names recognising, finding and naming halves; writing simple fractions appears in Year 2. Ask the teacher how symbols are being introduced.

Must this be learnt in autumn? No autumn deadline is specified in the maths programme. Schools have flexibility over when they introduce content within key stage 1, which means Years 1 and 2. Ask when your child's class explores halves.

What if my child calls unequal pieces halves? Look together at which piece contains more paper, then try an equal split. You can keep the conversation gentle and ask the teacher for a suitable next example.

Sources

- Department for Education — National curriculum in England: mathematics programmes of study, particularly Year 1 'Number – fractions', its accompanying notes and guidance, Year 2 'Number – fractions', and 'School curriculum'. Published on GOV.UK: [Read the mathematics programmes of study](<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study>). The folding game, proposed resource format and home adaptations are original suggestions, not activities prescribed by the Department for Education.