

Lining Up to Add: Helping Your Child with Place Value Columns

Key points

- In Year 2, children build on their understanding of tens and ones (this is called place value) to help them add two-digit numbers.
- When adding two two-digit numbers, each digit needs to sit in the right column, so tens are added to tens and ones are added to ones.
- Lining digits up correctly matters even more when numbers have a different number of digits, such as adding a one-digit number to a two-digit number.
- Many schools use a simple grid with 'tens' and 'ones' headings before moving on to 'carrying' a digit into the next column.
- Getting comfortable with columns now helps build a strong foundation for written column addition later on.
- Every school sets this out a little differently, so it's worth asking your child's teacher how they do it in class.

Things to try at home

- Use dried pasta, buttons or coins to make small 'tens' bundles and 'ones' piles when chatting about numbers around the house.
- Draw a simple grid with two columns labelled 'tens' and 'ones', and ask your child to write a two-digit number by posting each digit into the right box.
- Spot two-digit numbers together when you're out and about, such as house numbers or prices, and ask which digit is the tens and which is the ones.
- Play a quick game where you say a two-digit number and your child shows the tens and ones using fingers, toys or building blocks.
- Keep it short and playful — a minute or two is plenty, with no pressure to get it exactly right.

Find out more

- Your child's class teacher or school website, for details on how column addition is taught in your child's class.
- GOV.UK: National curriculum in England - mathematics programmes of study, for the official Key Stage 1 maths curriculum.
- GOV.UK: information for parents on the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.