

Tricky Tens: Making 11-20 with a Ten and Some Ones

Key points

- In Reception (the school year for four- and five-year-olds) and Year 1 (the year for five- and six-year-olds), children learn to see numbers like 13 as 'a ten and three more' rather than just counting up to them one by one.
- Teachers often use a ten-frame (a simple grid of ten boxes) or a bead string (a string of beads, usually ten of one colour then more of another) so children can picture a full ten plus some extra ones.
- A part-whole diagram (a simple drawing that splits a number into smaller parts) might show that 16 is made of a 'whole' of 16 split into the parts '10' and '6'.
- Seeing teen numbers this way is an important step towards place value - the idea that where a digit sits in a number changes what it is worth.
- Lots of children find this stage tricky at first, and that is completely normal - it is a new way of thinking about numbers, not just harder counting.
- Schools may use slightly different resources or wording for this, so it is worth asking the teacher what is used in class if you would like to match it at home.

Things to try at home

- Use buttons, pasta or toy bricks: make a group of exactly ten, then add a few more and ask 'how many is that altogether?'
- Draw a simple ten-frame on paper (a grid of ten boxes) - fill the first ten, then add extra ones in a second row and count the total together.
- While doing an everyday job like setting the table or tidying toys, count out ten items into one pile and a few more into another, then chat about the total.
- Play a quick 'ten and some more' game with counters and a dice - count out ten counters, roll the dice, add that many more, and say the new number together.
- Keep it short and playful - a minute or two is plenty, with no need for drilling or testing.

Find out more

- Your child's class teacher - ask what resources or words they use in class, since approaches can vary between schools.
- GOV.UK's National Curriculum pages for mathematics, which set out what is taught in England.
- The school's maths lead or SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator), for ideas tailored to a child with SEND or a child learning English.