

Preschool math skills checklist, ages 3 to 5

Put this page on the fridge for two weeks. Tick a skill when you SEE it in ordinary play, meals and shopping. Do not test. Children reach these in different orders, and a year either way is ordinary.

Child's name: _____ Age: _____ Dates: _____ to _____

1. Counting

#	Skill	Not yet	Sometimes	Yes
1	Says the numbers to 10 in order			
2	Says the numbers to 20 in order			
3	Counts 5 objects, one touch for each			
4	Counts 10 objects accurately			
5	Knows the last number counted is how many			
6	Counts out a set you ask for ("bring me four")			

2. Number sense

7	Sees 1, 2 or 3 without counting			
8	Sees up to 5 without counting (dots on a die)			
9	Recognises the numerals 1 to 5			
10	Recognises the numerals 0 to 10			
11	Matches a numeral to a group of objects			
12	Says which group has more, fewer, or the same			
13	Adds one or two with objects			
14	Takes away with objects, up to 5			

3. Shapes and space

15	Names circle, square and triangle			
16	Names rectangle; talks about sides and corners			
17	Uses position words (in, on, under, next to, behind)			
18	Completes a 12-piece puzzle; copies a block tower			

4. Measuring and comparing

19	Compares two things (longer, shorter, heavier, holds more)			
20	Puts three or more things in order of size			
21	Measures with a repeated object ("seven blocks long")			

5. Sorting and patterns

22	Sorts by one feature (colour, size or kind)			
23	Copies and continues a pattern (red, blue, red, blue)			
24	Makes a pattern of their own, or fills a gap			

The skills that matter most: 3, 5 and 12 (counting real objects, knowing the total, more and fewer). Based on the goals US preschools use for the end of pre-K (Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, by 60 months).

What to do with the checklist

Read it like this

"Sometimes" is the useful column: those skills are arriving, and a game will help. Pick two or three of them, in areas 1 and 2 first, and play one game for each for a month. Then look again. A checklist is a way to choose what to play next, not a score.

One ten-minute activity for each area

- 1. Counting** Set the table. How many people? Count out one fork for each place. Then ask: so how many forks?
- 2. Number sense** Dice and snacks. Roll a die, say the number without counting the dots, take that many raisins. Who has more?
- 3. Shapes and space** Shape hunt: find five circles in the room. Then hide a toy and give clues with position words only.
- 4. Measuring** The shoe line. Put everyone's shoes in order from shortest to longest. How many blocks long is the biggest?
- 5. Sorting, patterns** The laundry. Sort socks into pairs, lay them out big, small, big, small, and ask what comes next.

What is normal at each age

Age	Usually ticked	Usually arriving
3	Sorting, more and fewer, counting to 3 or 5, circle	Counting five objects, position words
4	Counting to 10, five objects, the total, basic shapes	Numerals to 5, counting out a set, patterns
5	Most of the 24	Adding and taking away with objects, counting to 20

Not expected before kindergarten

Writing numerals neatly, written addition, counting to 100, telling the time, knowing coins by value. A preschooler who cannot do these is on schedule.

When to mention it to someone

Close to age five, if a child cannot count three objects, does not seem to notice more and fewer, or has lost skills they had: ask the preschool teacher or pediatrician.

The full guide: sciencewithshobha.com/blog/preschool-math-skills-checklist-printable-pdf-ages-3-to-5/