

**Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.**

## Subitising nature hunt

### Learning aims

- To be able to subitise one, two and three objects (without counting)
- To develop the ability to collect a specific number of objects accurately
- To understand and use number words
- To become familiar with numerals (number symbols)
- To link numerals with amounts up to three
- To work together to problem solve.



### Resources

- Access to nature; either your setting's outdoor space or a local outdoor space such as a park
- Recycled containers (one per child, large enough to collect items in)
- Natural resources to collect such as pinecones, conkers, sticks, stones and leaves. If these aren't readily available then you may need to collect and provide some resources for children
- Large number cards with numerals - one, two and three made from paper or recycled card (one set for each group)
- Large subitising cards with dots representing one, two and three made from paper or recycled card (One set for each group).

### Activity outline

- Explain to the children that they are going to go on a nature walk to collect a range of natural objects, for example, small pebbles, twigs, leaves
- Set up a central meeting point in the area you are exploring and lay down a blanket so children know this is where to return when they have collected their items
- Put children into pairs or groups of three explaining that they need to stay together as they explore and to ensure they return with their buddies. Staff must supervise children as they explore. Give each group a container to collect natural resources (or each child if you have enough)
- When children return, give them a set of number cards and ask them to lay these out in order of one, two, three. Engage children in saying the numbers one, two and three. Encourage the children to use their fingers as they count to represent the numbers, which will support their developing subitising skills

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- Support children to identify one, two and three of the same objects and place these by each card, for example, one pebble, two leaves, three conkers
- Repeat this numerous times supporting children to identify different combinations of one, two and three using the objects they have found
- Next show children the number and corresponding subitising card together showing one, two and three as numerals and quantity
- Focus on the subitising cards and ask children if they can tell you how many dots there are on each card. The aim is for children to say they amount if possible without having to count it (subitise). This takes lots of practice
- Lay out the subitising cards and ask children if they can find that quantity of objects and place these by the card
- Repeat this numerous times supporting children to identify different combinations of one, two and three using subitising skills.

### Extending the activity

- Increase the numbers and dots to five to support counting and subitising to five
- Instead of cards use a large or small dotty dice
- Provide a range of numerals in the environment
- Encourage children to subitise small amounts daily, such as by playing 'fast fingers'. Ask children to show you an amount quickly using their fingers – a fun and simple game for developing subitising.

### Special considerations

If the activity is carried out in a public outdoor space, follow procedures for outings ensuring a full risk assessment is carried out and staff: child ratios ensure children's safety at all times.

### NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [Parents: Getting Ready for School: Maths Confidence - factsheet](#)
- [Maths: Making Maths Matter – online course](#)
- [Maths Champions Programme](#)
- [Maths: Maths in Early Years for England – online course](#)
- [Maths: Mini Maths Explorers – Outdoors Challenge – online course](#)
- [Supporting Your Mini Maths Explorers – publication](#)
- [Outdoor Play – publication](#)
- [Nature Play – Inspiring Outdoor Approaches – publication](#)