

Problem Solvers Activity 9: The Bird and the Coin

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...¹

- Understand that adding to (or taking away) one or more objects from a set will increase (or decrease) the number of objects in the set.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

3" cardboard circle

Aluminum foil

12 people figures

12 animal figures

24 interlocking square plastic blocks (like Unifix, Duplo, Lego, or similar)

6 baskets

Handout 1: Characters

Handout 2: The Coin

Handout 3: The Bird and the Coin Story

PREPARATION:

- Cut out a 3-inch cardboard circle. Glue or wrap a piece of aluminum foil over it to make it look like a shiny coin.
- Print **Handout 1** in color, if possible. Make a set of 7 character cards: Cut out each picture and glue to sturdy cardboard/manila folder.
- Print 3 copies of **Handout 2**.
- Print a copy of **Handout 3** for an easy reference as you tell the story.
- Place 4 people figures and 4 animal figures in each of 3 baskets. Place 8 blocks in each of 3 baskets. Set these aside until the partner activity.
- Prepare copies of the parent handout for distribution.
- If you plan on implementing the optional book activity, refer to the preparation instructions in that section.

¹ California Department of Education (2008). Preschool Learning Foundations. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoolff.pdf>

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

ENGAGE

Gather a group of 6 children. Choose a place for this activity where there is space for 6 children to line up—a Circle area works well.

Have the coin and character cards nearby.

SAY: Problem Solvers, we are going to share a story this morning. This story happens in a neighborhood just like yours. Who are some of the people you see in your neighborhood? What animals might you see? *Facilitate a conversation with students.*

EXPAND

SAY: Are you ready for our story? I'm going to need some help telling this story. Problem Solvers, can you help me? I'm going to give you each a picture that shows part of the story. When we get to your part, I'll need your help.

Keep the Bird card for yourself. Distribute each of the remaining 6 character cards to the 6 children in your group. Tell each child what their picture is when you give it to them: "You have picture of a boy on a skateboard. Hmmm, I wonder what part of the story you'll be helping with!"

SAY: Time for our story. Problem Solvers, I need you to listen *really* closely for when it's your turn to help. Look at your picture. When you hear me talk about your picture, raise your hand.

TELL THE STORY:

Once upon a time, a mom asked her daughter Addie to go to the store and buy some milk. Mom gave Addie a shiny coin to buy the milk. [Show children the coin and then put it on the far side of the circle area, leaving space for all the other characters to line up behind the coin.] Addie started off to the grocery store, but she dropped the coin. And that's when things got interesting!

[Read the story from **Handout 3**, which shows which character goes with each of the verses below.]

*Addie went to the store one day.
She met a bird along the way.
The bird flew off with her shiny coin.
And she ran after it.*

Take the bird card and fly it through the air. Place the bird card in line next to the coin. If they haven't raised their hand, ask the child with the Addie card to come up and stand next to the bird in line.]

ASK: What can we do to find out how many characters are in our line? Who can help me count?

Together, count 2 characters in line: the bird and Addie.

CONTINUE THE STORY:

*Her friend Marco saw her run,
And he decided to join the fun.*

[Ask the child with the skateboarder card to join the line next to Addie. Say: *We added a character! Will we have more or less in our set? Let's find out how many we have now.* Point to each character and count together with children.]

CONTINUE THE STORY:

*Bingo the dog joined in the chase.
He loved Marco, and he loved to race.*

[Ask the child with the dog card to join the line next to Marco. Say, "We added one more character to our story. Let's see how many we have now."]

CONTINUE THE STORY:

*Next in line was Silky the cat.
She liked chasing dogs—imagine that!*

[Ask the child with the cat card to join the line next to the dog. Say, "We added one more character to our story. Will we have more or less in our set? Let's see how many we have now."]

CONTINUE THE STORY:

*Grandpa drove by in his big blue van.
He jumped out, and then he ran.*

[Ask the child with the grandpa card to join the line next to the cat.]

ASK questions to explore children's observations about the line, such as:

- When Grandpa joined the line, we added one more. What can we do to find out how many we have in our line now?
- What has happened to our line since the bird flew away with the coin? Did it get longer or shorter? [Are there more or less characters in our line now?]

CONTINUE THE STORY:

*Just when they thought the coin was gone—
There was Mama on the lawn.
And she was angry...*

Ask the child with the mom card to join the line next to the grandpa. Ask children why Mama might be angry, and how you could tell by looking at her. How would she stand? What would her face look like? Can they try to look angry? Observe: "We added Mama to our story—that's one more character. Let's see how many we have now."]

CONTINUE THE STORY:

*When the bird saw the look in Mama's eye
He dropped that coin right out of the sky.
It landed in a patch of clover.
And just like that—the chase was over.*

[If time allows, have the children leave the line one at a time, and count how many are left as each child leave. Use this as an opportunity to observe how the line is changing by asking questions like:

- Is our set getting bigger or smaller?
- Do we have more or less in our set? What makes you think that?

Conclude the story by having the bird character fly away into your lap.

EXPLORE

For children aged 2 ½ to 3 ½ years, repeat the story, choosing different children for different parts.

An alternative: As children become familiar with the activity, modify the activity by asking them to tell the story in their own words. Prompt them by saying, "Silky the Cat is next. Would someone like to tell this part of the story for me?"

For children aged 3 ½ to 4 years, give children the opportunity to create stories of their own in partner practice. Form three pairs of children. Provide one child in the pair with a basket of 4 people figures and 4 animal figures. Provide the other child in the pair with a basket of 8 blocks.

Say: The next game is all about telling your own Chasing Story! One partner will tell the story and the other partner will keep track of how many characters are in line using the blocks.

Place a copy of **Handout 2** (the coin) in front of each pair. Do a quick demonstration with one pair of children: "Here is your coin. You're going to tell a story about who is chasing after the coin!"

Prompt the child with the basket of figures to begin telling the story. They can choose a figure(s) and tell their character's part of the story. For example, the child may say: "A dinosaur grabbed the coin." They can place that figure next to the coin.

Ask the other child with the blocks: "Your friend added one dinosaur to the line. How many blocks will you add to your stack?"

After this demonstration, give children time to make lines with about 6-8 figures and stacks with 6-8 blocks. When they are done, have children put away their figures/blocks and switch roles, starting over with a new partner telling their story.

Observe children's efforts to tell the story and stack blocks according to their partner's directions. It helps to have a co-teacher assisting with this activity as there are three pairs working at the same time. If needed, you can have children work in two groups of 3, with one partner assisting with counting/stacking the blocks.

REFLECT

SAY: Today we told stories where we added more to a line and took away from a line. Let's think about how we were Problem Solvers during this game.

- What ideas did you use to find out how many characters were in your line today?
- What happened to your line when you added characters?
- What happened to your line when you took characters away?

SAY: Let's see, Problem Solvers. We have a group of children right here. What can we do to find out how many are in our group? [Let children count or talk through how to figure out the total number of children in the group. Create a stack of 6 blocks to represent each child.]

Explain that you will tell a silly story about each child as they go back to class.

Dismiss children by groups of 1, 2, or 3 with prompts like: *Brooklyn left the Problem Solvers group because she was going to take her pet lion on a walk.* Remove the appropriate number of blocks each time you dismiss a child/children.

Pause and check-in with children to see if they think there are more or less in the group each time, and count how many students are left in the Circle area. Continue until all students have been dismissed.

Individualizing the Activity

MAKE IT MORE CHALLENGING:

- Use larger quantities (9-12) for the partner activity.
- In the partner activity, when the first partner has told a story with about 6-8 characters in line, ask children to switch roles. Let the new partner decide how many characters leave the line at a time: *One dinosaur ran away.* The other partner will remove blocks from the stack based on the new story.

MAKE IT LESS CHALLENGING:

- Use smaller quantities (3-4) for the opening story activity and modify the story as needed.
- Do not transition into small group work. Instead, repeat the opening activity a second or third time.

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- Point out when groups are coming together (or separating) in different ways.
 - We had 3 children in the Blocks area but now Naya joined us. So we have 1 more in our group. That makes 4.
 - Look at the 2 squirrels over by the dumpster! Oh, 1 ran away. Now there is 1 left.
 - We had 5 children waiting for their grown-ups, but Martin's dad came to pick him up. Now there are 4 children waiting.
- Compare quantities during everyday moments.
 - I brought out 4 nap mats. Ms. Robin brought out 3 nap cots. Who brought out more nap mats?
 - We have 5 children at the table. I have 3 paper plates. How many more plates do I need so all the children have a plate?

Song: *Blue Jay Chase*

The first time you play this song, ask children pat the beat on their laps while listening (it helps if you model how). After that, encourage children to participate in the song by modeling the gestures below.

It's a blue jay chase, a blue jay chase
All around the barnyard.

Move arms up and down as if flying

Sister has dropped her coin
And the blue jay flew away with it.

Pretend to hold coin in fingers and open fingers to "drop" it

One in line, chasing that blue jay
All around the barnyard.

Hold up one finger

Next, a chicken chases the grain
Right after sister

Bend arms at elbow and flap "wings" up and down

Two in line, chasing that blue jay all around
the barnyard.

Hold up two fingers

Marco sees and he starts in
Chasing that chicken

Run in place

Three in line, chasing that blue jay all around
the barnyard.

Hold up three fingers

Bingo the dog joined the fun
Chasing after Marco

Hold hands out like paws, pant like a dog

Four in line, chasing that blue jay all around
the barnyard.

Hold up four fingers

Silky the curious cat,
Chased after Bingo

Lean head side to side

Five in line, chasing that blue jay all around
the barnyard.

Hold up five fingers

Mother looked, with a gasp
And chased after Silky

Hand to cheeks, open mouth to show surprise

Six in line, chasing that blue jay all around
the barnyard.

Hold up six fingers

Grandpa leaped and he went, too
Chasing after everyone.

Big jump in place.

Seven in line, chasing that blue jay all around
the barnyard.

Hold up seven fingers.

It's a blue jay chase, a blue jay chase
All around the barnyard.

Move arms up and down as if flying

But then that blue jay, he got tired

Lift up and drop shoulders; big sigh

And dropped that coin on the ground...

*Hold fingers together (as if clutching the coin),
then open them up (as if dropping it)*

Everybody STOPPED...chasing that blue jay
all around the barnyard!

*Dramatically FREEZE in place and sit down
very quickly*

Making Literacy Connections

Share the following book with children as an opportunity to deepen their understanding of counting and quantity. The literacy extension activity below suggests another play-based experience to invite counting.

Suggested Book: *The Gingerbread Man* by Catherine McCafferty

AS YOU READ:

Ask children if they have ever made cookies before. What kind of cookies did they make? What did they do to bake cookies? Have they ever tasted gingerbread before? How did it taste? Did they like it or not?

As the story progresses, more and more people and animals chase the Gingerbread Man. As the line increases, pause on each page and have the children help you count "how many now."

Encourage children to join in the refrain, "You can run and run as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!"

You can also visually represent the line of people and animals chasing the gingerbread by creating a block stack, adding a block each time someone joins the chase.

BUILD ON THE BOOK

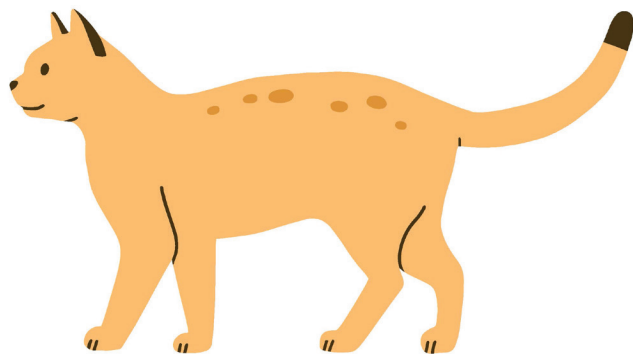
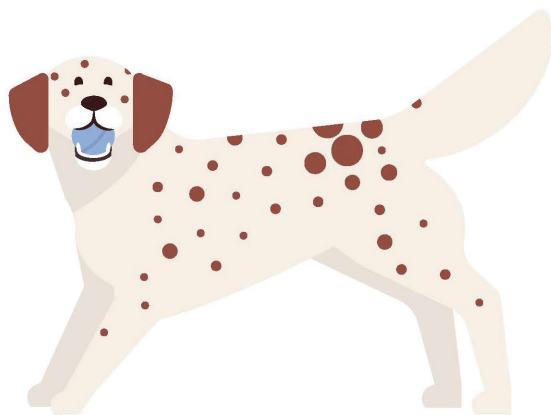
Materials: Feltboard. Photocopies of each character in *The Gingerbread Man*, glued to cardstock. On the back of each character, affix a piece of hook-and-loop fastener (like Velcro)

After you have read the story several times, let children re-tell the story in their own words using their memory and the illustrations as cues. As they tell the story, they can add their character to the feltboard. [You can add the book, feltboard, and characters as a Center activity in your classroom to create daily opportunities for re-telling and composing sets.]

You can also create a classroom book of *The Gingerbread Man* by having children make up their own story using children's and teacher's names from the classroom as people chasing the Gingerbread Man through school. Children can draw illustrations; teachers can write the words; and a photocopy of the book can be sent home with each child.

Handout 1: Characters



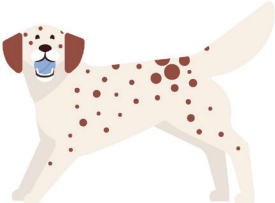




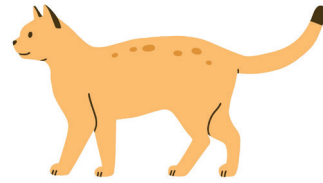
Handout 2: The Coin



Handout 3: The Bird and the Coin

<p>Addie went to the store one day. She met a bird along the way. The bird flew off with her shiny coin. (She ran after it.)</p>	 An illustration of a green and blue parrot with its wings spread, flying above a young girl with dark hair in a ponytail. The girl is wearing a white t-shirt with a blue bow at the neck and green pants, and she is running quickly.
<p>Her friend Marco saw her run, And he decided to join the fun.</p>	 An illustration of a young boy with dark hair, wearing a light blue shirt with white polka dots and dark pants, riding a red skateboard. He is smiling and has one arm raised.
<p>Bingo the dog joined in the chase. He loved Marco, and he loved to race.</p>	 An illustration of a white dog with brown spots, standing and looking towards the left.

Next in line was Silky the cat.
She liked to chase dogs—imagine that!



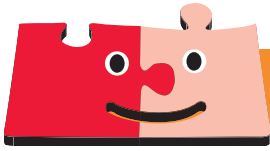
Grandpa drove by in his big blue van.
He jumped out, and then he ran.



Just when they thought the coin was gone—
There was mama on the lawn.
(Mom was mad.)



When the bird saw the look in Mama's eye
He dropped that coin right out of the sky.
It landed in a patch of clover.
And just like that—the chase was over.



Let's Tell a Story

This week, tell a story together to help your child learn about "one more" and "one less."

Find 6 stuffed animals or 6 other household objects (spoon, cup, toy car, shoe, etc.) Count them together with your child.

Say, "Let's tell a story. I have 6 animals here. Let's tell a story about what happens to these animals."



Choose one to start with: "Once upon a time, the bunny started hopping across the park to find some berries to eat." Put the bunny at the front of what will your line of animals.

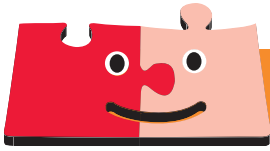
Let your child choose the next animal. Make up a story about that animal: "The bear was chasing the bunny to ask if he wanted to play on the swings." Let your child add the bear to the line.

Ask your child: What can we do to figure out how many animals are in our line now? Let your child think it through with your help.

Continue telling the story, using the remaining animals. With each animal, pause to find out "how many" are in the line each time you add one.

When you've used all the animals, tell a story that takes each animal out of the line: "The bunny needed to eat dinner, so he left to go home." Pause as you take animals away to let your child explore how many are left in line. Are there more? Are there less? What can they do find out how many?

When you're done, give your child a turn to tell *you* a number story!



Solo para familias

Vamos a contar una historia

Esta semana, cuenten una historia juntos para ayudar a su hijo a aprender a agregar “uno más” y “uno menos”.

Encuentre 6 animales de peluche u otros 6 objetos domésticos (cuchara, taza, carro de juguete, zapato, etc.)

Diga: “Vamos a contar una historia. Tengo 6 animales aquí. Vamos a contar una historia sobre lo que les sucede a estos animales”.



Elija uno para comenzar: “Érase una vez, un conejito que comenzó a saltar a través del parque para encontrar algunas bayas para comer”. Ponga al conejito al frente de lo que será su línea de animales.

Deje que su hijo elija el siguiente animal. Invente una historia sobre ese animal: “El oso estaba persiguiendo al conejito para preguntarle si quería jugar en los columpios”. Deje que su hijo agregue el oso a la línea.

Pregúntele a su hijo: ¿Qué podemos hacer para averiguar cuántos animales hay en nuestra fila ahora? Deje que su hijo lo piense bien con su ayuda.

Continúe contando la historia, usando los animales restantes. Con cada animal, haga una pausa para averiguar “cuántos más” están en la línea cada vez que agregue uno.

Cuando haya usado todos los animales, cuente una historia que saque a cada animal de la línea: “El conejito necesitaba cenar, así que se fue a casa”. Haga una pausa mientras se lleva a los animales para que su hijo explore cuántos quedan en la fila. ¿Hay más? ¿Hay menos? ¿Qué pueden hacer para averiguar cuántos quedan?

Cuando haya terminado, ¡dele el turno a su hijo para que le cuente una historia numérica!