



PARENT *handout*

Thinking Skills: Matching, Sorting, and Classifying

Your 2-year-old's brain is constantly forming new patterns of connections. Your child can now easily find tiny details on objects. This helps him see what is the same and what is different.

To match, sort, and classify, your child needs to notice how things are alike or different. Practicing these thinking skills lays the foundation for learning reading, math, and science later on.

Matching

Matching involves finding items that are identical. Your child will match many objects without instruction because he feels that they are alike. Matching is a thinking skill that usually emerges before sorting and classifying.

Matching games are popular with 2-year-olds.

- > Ask your child to bring you his shoes and he will probably bring a matched pair. He knows that he wears two shoes that are exactly alike.
- > Place identical stickers on index cards or cut out identical pictures from magazines, junk mail, or advertising brochures. Watch your child find the ones that are the same.
- > Buy pairs of postcards to make a matching game. Lay several pairs on the floor face up and ask your child to find and give you one pair at a time.

Sorting

Sorting involves separating unlike objects into groups according to their similarities. When your child matches more than two objects, he is sorting. Objects within a group do not have to be identical, but they should have something in common, such as color or size.

While it may be obvious to adults how a child should sort a group of objects, sometimes the child has his own ideas about how objects are related. If you can't see the relationship, ask your child why he has put certain objects together. You may find he is sorting, but not in the same way you would.

After sorting things one way (by color) your child will find it very difficult to switch to sorting by something else (shape). That sorting ability will develop later.

Add sorting to everyday interactions. Follow your child's lead. Praise however he sorts things.

- > Ask your child to help sort silverware as it is put away. Ask him to sort the

laundry by each family member. Your child will enjoy helping with these common household tasks.

- > When you bring home the groceries, allow your child to separate the foods packed in cans from those packaged in boxes.
- > Watch how your child plays with his toys. He may be sorting cars from trucks or placing all the same shaped blocks together.

Classifying

Classifying involves grouping objects because they are alike in some way but do not necessarily share a common characteristic. Classifying is a higher level skill than sorting because the relationship between the objects may be even less obvious.

For example, your child learns where objects belong in the house. Some items are "kitchen things" and some are "bathroom things." Foods are classified as "things you eat" and clothes are "things you wear."

Many children are close to 3 years old before they begin to classify objects.



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Be patient and help your child see the relationships between objects.

- > Show your child three objects, two from one category (like a marker) and one that belongs to another category (like a spoon). Ask him which one does not belong with the others and listen to his reasons for his choice. Talk to him about how the objects are used in a similar way.
- > Present objects in the same category and ask your child why they go together. You may get some creative answers that will give you insight about how your child thinks!



REFLECTION

Take time to watch your child.

What objects does your child like to match or sort?

What are you noticing about your child's early learning around math concepts like these?

What are some good times of day or activities for encouraging your child to sort and match?