

# Number games with preschoolers count for little, study suggests

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New research suggests there's limited benefit to playing numeracy games with pre-schoolers. Credit: University of Melbourne

New research suggests playing counting games with young children does little to improve their numeracy skills.

A working paper from the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research examined the impact of singing songs, telling stories, playing counting games and doing puzzles with pre-school-aged [children](#).

It found such activities were of little benefit to their numeracy skills later in Year 4.

"While reading to children clearly helps them with their reading skills, none of the other activities studied here can be conclusively said to influence the early reading or numeracy achievement of children," said Associate Professor Chris Ryan from the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Business and Economics.

"However, the current research does not suggest that parents stop engaging in numeracy activities with their children."

Associate Professor Ryan said further research is needed to better understand how the home learning environment affects early childhood learning.

While some families engage more in activities that seem to relate to the development of the child's reading or numeracy skills, it appears this says much more about the families and their focus on the development of their child than it does about the effectiveness of these activities.

"It is not clear whether the set of activities studied are just the wrong ones, or that they are not captured very well in the available data, but most are not closely associated with far better reading and [numeracy skills](#)," Associate Professor Ryan said.

Reading to children was the exception. Similar to findings in other studies, reading to children early in their lives improves the child's reading ability, according to the paper.

**More information:** Parental Investments and Child Development: Counting Games and Early Numeracy.

[www.melbourneinstitute.com/dow ... series/wp2016n34.pdf](http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/dow...series/wp2016n34.pdf)

Provided by University of Melbourne

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