

# General Maths Commentary (3-5 Years)



## What to Look For

Counting with purpose (not just rote)

One-to-one correspondence

Comparing amounts  
(more/fewer/ same)

Using maths language in play

Noticing patterns, shapes, and measures

Problem-solving (trial and error)

Representing numbers (objects, marks, fingers)

Explaining thinking aloud



## Question (Open-Ended)

"Who has more? How do you know?"

"Can you show me that in a different way?"

"How could we solve this?"

"Why do you think that?"



## Comment (Model Language)

"I can see you're counting carefully."

"You've got more than me!"

"That's a big tower-look how tall it is!" (compare similar height objects)

"You used two blocks... now you've added one more."

"I noticed you sorted them by size."

"You're working it out step by step."



## Extend (Deepen Thinking)

Compare quantities in play  
("Who has fewer?")

Explore composition of number  
(e.g.  $4 = 2 + 2$ )

Introduce simple problems ("We need one more...")

Encourage reasoning ("How do you know it's bigger?")

Model mathematical storytelling in play.



## Vocabulary

count, number, more, fewer, same, equal, total altogether, add, take away, how many big, small, bigger, smaller, full, empty long, short, heavy, light first, next, last



## What to Avoid

"Count properly."

"That's wrong."

**Rapid-fire questioning without thinking time**

Over-correcting instead of exploring  
Focusing only on right answers over process

# Counting & Cardinality Talk (Ages 3-5)



## What to Look For

Saying number names (not always in order at first)

Touching or moving objects when counting

Saying one number per object (one-to-one counting)

Knowing the total after counting

Noticing when counting goes wrong

Comparing groups (more/fewer/same)

Recognising small amounts without counting (subitising)



## Question (Open-Ended)

"What do you need to do to make sure you don't miss any?"

"Shall we check that again?"

"What was the last number you said?"

"Can you show me that amount on your fingers?"



## Comment (Model Language)

"You're counting each one carefully."

"You touched each object as you counted."

"You said 'five' at the end... that tells us how many there are."

"You started again when it didn't sound right."

"You didn't need to count, you just knew!"



## Extend (Deepen Thinking)

Encourage children to recount to check accuracy

Invite them to move objects while counting to support tracking

Model slow, accurate counting

Introduce small changes

(add/remove one and recount)

Encourage different representations (fingers, marks, objects)

Prompt children to explain their thinking



## Vocabulary

count, number, how many, altogether, last number, more, fewer, same, one more, one less, check, count again, miss, each, group



## REMEMBER!

Keep counting meaningful.

**Pause and give thinking time.**

**Let children finish speaking.**

Recount together, don't rush to correct.

Focus on the process. Encourage children to explain their thinking.

# Comparing Quantity Commentary (Ages 3-5)



## What to Look For

Noticing which group has more, fewer or the same  
Comparing by looking, matching or counting  
Beginning to line up or group objects to compare  
Using early comparison language (more/fewer/same)  
Checking by counting when unsure  
Recognising small differences without counting



## Question (Open-Ended)

"Which group has more? How do you know?"  
"Are they the same or different?"  
"What could we do to check?"  
"Can you match them to find out?"  
"What happens if we add one more?"



## Comment (Model Language)

"You're looking carefully to see which has more."  
"I can see you're matching them to check."  
"You counted to make sure."  
"These look the same."  
"You noticed there were more without counting."



## Extend (Deepen Thinking)

Encourage children to line up or match objects to compare  
Introduce counting to check ideas  
Add or remove items and recompare  
Explore different arrangements of the same amount  
Encourage children to explain their thinking



## Vocabulary

more, fewer, same, lots, not as many  
compare, check, count, group, match



## REMEMBER!

Keep comparisons practical and visible

**Pause and give thinking time**

**Let children finish speaking**

Model checking strategies (matching, counting)

**Focus on how they know**

Encourage children to explain their thinking

# Subitising & Quick Recognition Commentary (Ages 3-5)



## What to Look For

Instantly recognising small amounts (1-3, then 4-5)

Saying how many without counting

Using familiar patterns (like dice or fingers)

Noticing when amounts look the same or different

Beginning to check by counting when unsure



## Question (Open-Ended)

"How many did you see?"

"How did you know?"

"Did you need to count?"

"What did it look like?"

"Can you show me that amount on your fingers?"

"Can you show me in a different way?"



## Comment (Model Language)

"You noticed something straight away."

"You knew how many without counting."

"You recognised that straight away."

"That looks like a pattern you know."

"You checked to make sure."

"You saw they were the same."



## Extend (Deepen Thinking)

Use quick flashes of small quantities

Explore different arrangements of the same number

Connect to fingers, dice and familiar patterns

Encourage children to explain what they saw

Check by counting after recognising



## Vocabulary

how many, same, different, pattern, group, quick, recognise, count, check



## REMEMBER!

**Keep it quick and playful**

Pause and give thinking time

Let children share what they saw

**Avoid over-counting, value instant recognition**

Focus on how they know

Encourage children to explain their thinking

# Pattern Spotting & Making Commentary (Ages 3-5)



## What to Look For

Noticing patterns in the environment (clothes, flooring, nature, routines)

Recognising and continuing simple patterns (AB, ABB)

Creating their own patterns using objects, sounds or actions

Talking about what repeats

Spotting when a pattern is wrong or changes



## Question (Open-Ended)

"What do you notice?"

"What is repeating?"

"What comes next?"

"How do you know?"

"Can you make your own pattern?"

"Where else can you see a pattern?"



## Comment (Model Language)

"You noticed a pattern there."

"That part is repeating."

"You carried the pattern on."

"You made your own pattern."

"You spotted something different."

"That looks the same again."

"Look! It is repeating again and and again!"



## Extend (Deepen Thinking)

Explore patterns in the environment (stripes, bricks, leaves, routines)

Encourage children to build, draw or act out patterns

Introduce different types of patterns (movement, sound, objects)

Make a mistake and invite children to spot and fix it

Encourage children to describe their pattern



## Vocabulary

pattern, repeat, again, next, same, different sequence, order, continue, copy, create



## REMEMBER!

**Look for patterns everywhere, not just in resources**

Pause and give thinking time

Let children finish explaining

Focus on noticing and describing, not just getting it right

**Encourage children to talk about what repeats**

Value children's own patterns, even if imperfect

# Shape & Spatial Language Commentary (Ages 3-5)



## What to Look For

Noticing and naming familiar shapes in play and the environment

Talking about where things are (in, on, under, next to)

Describing how objects fit, stack or move

Rotating and turning objects to make them fit

Recognising shapes in different orientations and sizes



## Question (Open-Ended)

"What shape can you see?"

"Where is it?"

"How could it fit?"

"What happens if you turn it?"

"Can you describe where it is?"

"What could you use to build that?"



## Comment (Model Language)

"You found a shape there."

"You're turning it to make it fit."

"That's on top / underneath."

"You moved it next to that one."

"That shape looks the same, just turned."

"You're fitting those together."



## Extend (Deepen Thinking)

Explore shapes in the environment (buildings, signs, everyday objects)

Encourage children to describe positions and movements

Model rotating and flipping shapes to fit

Build and talk about structures and layouts

Encourage children to explain how things fit together



## Vocabulary

shape, circle, square, triangle, rectangle  
in, on, under, next to, between, behind, in front, turn, flip, move, fit, build



## REMEMBER!

Explore shapes in the environment (buildings, signs, everyday objects)  
Encourage children to describe positions and movements

**Model rotating and flipping shapes to fit**  
Build and talk about structures and layouts  
Encourage children to explain how things fit together

# Measure Talk Commentary (Ages 3-5)



## What to Look For

Noticing differences in size, length, weight and capacity  
Using language like big, small, heavy, full

Comparing objects directly (holding, lifting, lining up, filling)

Beginning to order items (biggest to smallest)

Exploring filling and emptying containers

Checking and adjusting when things don't fit or balance



## Question (Open-Ended)

"Which is bigger / smaller?"

"How do you know?"

"Which feels heavier?"

"What happens if we fill it more?"

"Can you put them in order?"

"How could we check?"



## Comment (Model Language)

"You're seeing which one is bigger."

"That feels heavier."

"You filled it right to the top."

"You're lining them up to compare."

"That one holds more."

"You changed it to make it fit."

"You're comparing them carefully."

"You're seeing which holds more."



## Extend (Deepen Thinking)

Encourage direct comparison (hold, lift, line up, pour)

Explore ordering and sequencing (big → small, full → empty)

Use real experiences (water play, sand, construction)

Introduce simple measuring language in context

Encourage children to explain what they notice



## Vocabulary

big, small, bigger, smaller, long, short, heavy, light, full, empty, more, less, compare, measure, order, fill, pour



## REMEMBER!

Keep it hands-on and practical

Pause and give thinking time

Let children finish explaining

**Focus on comparing, not formal measuring**

Model clear language in context

Encourage children to explain their thinking