

Curious George Learns to Count

“Halfway to 100” Collages

Introduction

Fifty is an important number not only because it is five sets of ten but because it is halfway to 100! In *Curious George Learns to Count*, George counts all fifty states on the map. You can have your students create their own “Halfway to 100” collages in celebration of the halfway point as you count up to the 100th day of school.

Materials Needed

- One large piece of drawing or construction paper per student for use as background
- Various items (in baskets, one per table) to add to collage: scraps of fabric, magazine clippings, feathers, beads, bits of Styrofoam, buttons, etc. Use what you have available!
- Glue (small jars of plain white school glue and glue brushes work best, but glue sticks can be effective as well)

Background Knowledge

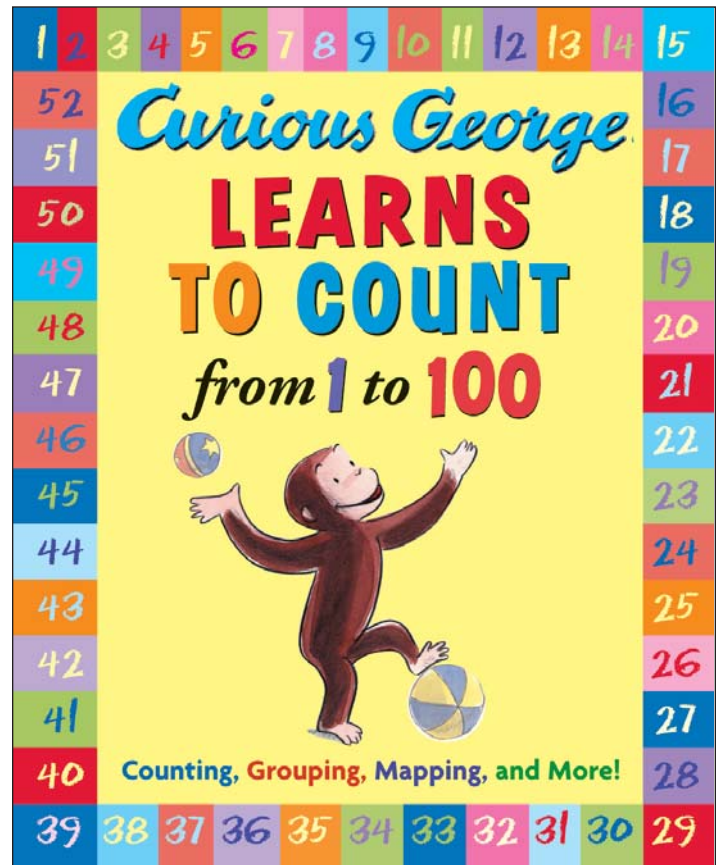
It is helpful if young children have had previous experiences with collage making so that they are not new to the concept or the skills involved. It can be helpful to introduce young children to collage by having them explore one new material at a time before providing them with many materials to choose from—for example, have them do one collage using only ripped paper. Have them do another collage using only fabric. This will help them get a sense of how the materials feel and what they can do.

Teaching

Tell your students that in celebration of the fiftieth day of school, they will be making collages using fifty items. Explore with your students how they plan to keep count. More experienced math students may be encouraged to group their pieces in tens (“How many groups of ten will you need to make fifty?” you might ask). Younger students might use strategies such as counting out fifty items before they begin creating the collage (you may want to provide paper bags for each child to collect their pieces in) or recounting to check how many pieces they have already glued down.

Activity

Send your students back to their tables. Each table should have a basket of mixed materials within reach of all the children. Provide each child with paper to glue his or her collage on, and if you like, a paper lunch bag in which to collect his or her



fifty items. As your students work it can be interesting to notice how they arrange their materials. Some students will naturally organize their items by fives or tens. Some will think only of the picture. Neither approach has greater value.

Share

As children share their collages, it can be interesting to discuss which collages are easier to count. This can help children see how grouping items helps keep us organized as we count.

The 100 Caterpillar

Introduction

Celebrate the number 100 by working together to create a caterpillar for your classroom using one hundred paper links! This is a good activity for the 100th day of school.

Materials Needed

- At least 100 pre-cut strips of construction paper in various colors
- Glue

Background Knowledge

It can be helpful if children have had experience making paper chains—many have done this activity before they reach kindergarten. The activity works best when children are not new to being asked to work collaboratively in teams or partnerships. Children should be comfortable counting to ten independently.

Teaching

Tell your students as they are gathered together in your class meeting area that they will be working together in teams to create a “100 caterpillar” using strips of construction paper. Tell them that each team will be responsible for making two chains of ten links each, and then you will gather together to connect those chains into a caterpillar with 100 links. Ask your students how many groups of ten they think they will need to make a chain with 100 links. If this is a new concept to your students, you will definitely want to show them visually on your white board or chalkboard that ten groups of ten make 100. If you have a 100s chart in your room, you can notice with your students that each row has ten numbers in it, that there are ten rows of numbers, and that the last number on the chart is 100. Have available some strips of paper and glue so that you can model for the children how to make a loop of paper, hold the glued edges until they stick, and then thread another paper through to make the next link in the chain. Tell your students that they will be working in their table groups to make chains of ten links.

Table Activity

If you have five tables in your room, ask each table group to make two chains of ten links. You will need to reorganize the groups as you see fit if your students’ normal seating is arranged differently. When each group has made two chains of ten links, invite all of your students back to the meeting area to assemble your caterpillar.

Assembly

Have your students sit in a circle with the chains of ten links in the center. Ask volunteers to come up one by one and attach each chain to another. You will want to have glue available so that children are able to unfasten one link and reglue it around the next chain. When all the chains have been attached, you can add eyes and antennae to one of the end links with marker. To celebrate your hard work, count the links all together. It may be that they don’t all add up to 100—this is not a problem, but another learning opportunity! Figure out together if you need to add on or take away links in order to have a chain of 100. When you have finished, display your 100 caterpillar in your room!

Counting Walk

Introduction

Curious George is always counting. His walk from his house into town is filled with exciting things to count. You and your students can take a walk around the block in the neighborhood of your school and do some counting, just like George!

Materials Needed

- One clipboard per child
- One pencil per child
- One piece of paper per child
- Chart paper

Background Knowledge

It is helpful if children understand the expectations of a neighborhood walk and have had experience going into the community on previous occasions. You may want to ask some family members to help chaperone the walk. You will want to have discussed the safety issues involved in taking a walk around your block, especially in terms of traffic if you will be walking near to streets. You may want to read *Curious George Learns to Count* to your students to help give them ideas about things to count in their neighborhood. They should know how to keep track of what they count using tally marks.

Teaching

Before you leave on your walk, brainstorm together about all the different things you could count in your neighborhood. Make a list that the children can see. Have each child choose (or assign them, if you prefer) one thing to count as you walk around the block. Have children make predictions about how many of each thing they might see. You may want to ask comparing questions such as “Do you think we will see more fire hydrants or more cars? Why?” or “Do you think we will see more people or more dogs? Why?” Give children clipboards, paper, and pencils before you leave your room. Ask them to write their names and, if they can, the name of the object they are counting. If they are not yet writing, you can have them draw a small picture of the object.

Activity

As you walk around your block, stop often so that children have a chance to write a tally mark each time they see an object. You may want to avoid extremely numerous objects like windows if you live in a densely populated area!

Share

When you return to your classroom, have children count up their own tally marks. Make a chart together that notes how many of each object was seen and counted. Discuss what, if anything, surprises the students. Were their predictions accurate? Did they see more or fewer dogs than they expected? Did they choose anything that was too hard to count (cars, pigeons, etc.) because there were too many, or because they were moving too fast? Did they leave anything out of their list of things to count that they wish they had counted?

100th Day Celebration: Collections of 100

Introduction

Each child will be invited to bring in their own collection of 100 objects to celebrate the 100th day of school. You can set up a temporary display in your classroom—a “Museum of 100”—and give children time to share each other’s collections. You may even invite family members or other classes to visit your museum.

Materials Needed

- Children will be encouraged to collect their 100 objects from home
- Letter written to families explaining the collections of 100 objects and asking them to help their children collect objects at home to bring to school
- Classroom space to temporarily display your class’s collections

Background Knowledge

Your students will have been counting toward the 100th day of school celebration since the very first day of school, so they will be familiar with the idea of celebrating the 100th day. Reading the book *Curious George Learns to Count* can be a great way to start brainstorming ideas for all the different things there are in the world to count! Children need not be able to count to 100 on their own, because they will be receiving support at home with this project. When they bring the collections to school, they will be receiving support from you!

Teaching

At least one week before the 100th day of school celebration in your classroom, you will want to have a discussion with your class about collecting 100 objects. Tell them that they will each be collecting 100 different objects from their homes to bring in to school for the 100th day. Tell them that their collections will make up a “Museum of 100” in the classroom, which families will be invited to see. *You will want to send home a notice on this day explaining the project to families and specifying the day you’d like collections to be brought in to the classroom. Remember to allow yourself an extra day or two for setup, if you’d like.* Brainstorm about objects that they think they could collect 100 of from their homes to bring in to school. Some examples: a building made with 100 Legos, 100 macaronis on a string, 100 buttons, 100 photographs, 100 bottle caps. *You may want to send a list of suggestions home with your letter to families as well.*

Activity

The actual collecting of objects will take place at home. As children begin to bring their collections in to school, keep them in a safe place until the 100th day celebration.

Museum Walk

On the 100th day of school, you will want to set up your classroom as a “museum” before the families arrive. You may want to display each child’s collection on his/her table. As families arrive, have them go on a “museum walk” in which they are able to view all the different collections of 100 objects in the room. You may want to discuss with children how collections of 100 different objects take up different amounts of space, depending on the size of the objects collected.

Taking Inventory

Introduction

There are many opportunities in the early-childhood classroom to stress the connection between counting and obtaining useful information. How will we know we have enough pencils, or chairs, or pieces of paper, or blocks, or dress-up clothes if we don’t count them and represent on paper how many we counted? During math time, create inventory teams that are assigned different areas in the classroom of which to take inventory—the children may carry clipboards and paper so that they can immediately record the results of their counting.

Materials Needed

- A classroom full of objects to count
- Clipboards, pencils, and paper for each child

Background Knowledge

You may want to have introduced children to the concept of counting for real-life purposes, but this is not necessary. It is helpful if all children in the class are able to count to ten, but this also is not necessary. You can assign children to take inventory in different areas of the room, depending on their facility with counting. For example, I might have a less-experienced counter take inventory of the tables in the room while I have a very experienced counter take inventory of the blocks in the block area. Children should be familiar with the idea of recording what they count with tally marks. It is helpful if you have already designated groups and decided what areas each group will be responsible for counting.

Teaching

As your students are gathered together in your class meeting area, tell them about a situation in which you needed to count or “take inventory” of something in the classroom—for example, another teacher borrowed the class set of scissors and when she returned them you wanted to make sure she didn’t return too many, so you had to count them. Tell your students that people out in the world often take inventory of supplies to make sure they have the correct number. Tell them that they will be working in teams to “take inventory” of classroom supplies.

Activity

Provide your students with clipboards, paper, and pencils. Send each team into the area it will be working on. If you feel more comfortable having children work at their tables, you can provide each table group with four or five collections of supplies

to count. Make sure that the numbers of objects don't exceed what they can handle counting independently. They can work together to count and record the amounts in each collection.

Share

When you come back together to your class meeting area, have your children bring their data with them. You may want to go around the circle and have each child report back to the group about which object they counted and how many there were. It can be helpful to discuss what surprised the children. Help them draw real-world conclusions from the data they have collected. For example, if you have a situation in which you discover that there are not enough pairs of scissors to go around, you can discuss with your students what you could do about the problem.

Counting Our Snack: How Much Do We Need?

Introduction

Just as Curious George counts plates, cups, straws, and blueberries for his breakfast, children can engage in a real-life counting situation if you ask them to work together in counting teams to make sure that each child has enough snack!

Materials Needed

- Disposable plates, napkins, and cups for each child
- Easily countable snack—crackers work well!
- Baskets for holding napkins and crackers
- Placemats (can be simply pieces of construction paper)

Background Knowledge

Eating a snack together will likely be a familiar activity for children in an early childhood classroom. You may even work some basic counting into each day's snack period—for example, asking each child to take six pretzel sticks from the basket. If snack is not a regular occurrence in your room, you will want to discuss some guidelines with children before this activity (staying at your seat while you are eating, cleaning up after yourself, not eating what's been dropped on the floor).

Teaching

Gather your students together in your class's meeting area. Have your supplies arranged so that children will be able to access them. Tell them that you will be working together to set up snack today and that you need to make sure each table has enough of everything you will need for snack time. Make a list with your students about what things they think they will need for snack. They will be likely to come up with many items on their own, but you may need to prompt them a bit to make sure you have all the items on the list. Now ask the children how many they think they will need of each thing. This sounds simple, but it can take some discussion for children to make the connection between needing exactly as many of each thing as there are children in the classroom. Counting the students together in the meeting area can be a big help. Have volunteers

count out enough of each thing for the whole class and put it in a pile. Then discuss how many of each you will need for each table (this will vary depending on how your classroom is arranged). You should discuss the need to count out more crackers, for example, if you want each child to be able to have more than one. Assign each child at a table one thing to be responsible for bringing to his or her table.

Activity

Call each table up to count out what they will need and bring it back to their table—for example, when the blue table comes to get their supplies, the napkin person will take five napkins back to their table, the cup person will take five cups, the cracker person will take fifteen crackers, and so on. The children will work together to set their tables and pass out the snack. You or another adult will need to pour the juice. Give yourselves a round of applause before you enjoy your snack together!

Extra Challenge

Ask the tables to count up everything on their table—how many cups, napkins, placemats, crackers, and cups are there altogether? How many are there if you count the supplies at *all* of the tables?

Further Ideas

Groups-of-Five Handprint Mural

Have available tempera paint and a large roll of mural-size paper. Children will need to be familiar with counting by fives. Tell them that you will be making a mural using their handprints. Discuss with the class how many different groups of five they will need in order to represent 100. Using different colors of tempera paint, have children add their handprints to the chart in groups of five prints. Display the mural for the 100th day celebration.

Estimating Distance

How far is 100 steps? In the hallway, ask children to estimate how far 100 steps will take them. Discuss the fact that each person's stride is different, so they may end up in different places. Have children place a sticky-note with their name on it in the place where they estimate they will end up after 100 steps. Starting from a starting line, have each take 100 steps (you may need to do this in small groups). Discuss how the children's estimates related to the actual distance they covered.

Counting Exercises

Each day during morning meeting when the class talks about how many days they have been in school, you can choose a simple movement to do as you practice counting up to that number—for example, raising both hands to the sky, or patting your head. As you count, make this movement for each number. This can help children new to counting keep track of their numbers. As you approach higher numbers, you will of course want to choose simpler motions! Children would enjoy being invited onto the playground for a special 100th day exercise celebration, during which they could do larger and more physical stretches—jumping jacks, for example.

Neighborhood Window Walk

Take the students on a walk down the block with clipboards, paper, and pencils. Have them count and tally how many windows they see as they walk. If your school is in a dense urban environment, you may choose to focus on only one side of a block. If your school is in the country, you may want to count the windows of the school itself, or choose another more relevant object to tally.

Visiting the Market

Depending on the location of your school, you may choose to visit a farmers' market (as George does), a supermarket, or a neighborhood fruit stand. George counts seventy carrots, seventy-one peppers, seventy-two tomatoes, and seventy-three pumpkin seeds. What vegetables and fruits do you find at your market? How many are there?

Counting Cookies

As a classroom project, bake cookies together (if this is possible in your classroom). During choice time, ask each child to decorate a cookie with five (or a number that makes sense to you) M&Ms. After baking them and before eating them, count the number of M&Ms on each cookie. This can provide a wonderful opportunity for focus on counting by fives.