Quick Look Dot Cards

Seeing Without Counting

Pull up to a friend's house, and before you've even parked, you know whether there are two cars in the driveway or three. You didn't count them. You glanced, and the number was simply there.

A young child doesn't have that glance yet. They see one, and one, and one, and build the amount up from one every time. These cards give them practice with the glance: you show an amount long enough to see, but not long enough to count.

How to play

1. Cut the cards apart. Start with amounts from one to five. Show a card for a second or two, cover it, and ask: "How many did you see?"
2. Once those feel comfortable, move up to six through ten. Each number has two cards that look different, so your child can't memorize one picture for each number. They have to see the amount itself.
3. When they answer quickly, ask what they noticed first.

Watch for

The most common slip is leaving the card up too long. Given time, a child will count, because counting is what they know. If you see their eyes moving from dot to dot or hear numbers under their breath, don't stop them. Just make the next one smaller or more familiar.

At the table, it can sound like this

"Six. I counted them."

"Look one more time. What do you see before you count?"

"Three on top and three on the bottom."

"There it is. You saw it that time."

Subitizing

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