

Counting words in a sentence

Activity Type: Introduce

Activity Form: Game

Grade: K

Group Size: Small Group, Whole Class

Length: 5 minutes

Materials: Ten counters in a cup for each student, overhead projector (optional)

Goal: Given a spoken sentence, the student can segment it into separate words ("sentence" -> "word" "word" "word").

Items: "My name is [your name]," "Peter was off school sick," "Melissa is wearing a red sweater," etc.

What to do

1. Give each student ten counters in a cup. **We're going to play a counting game. Each time I point to something, put one of your counters in front of you like this.** Demonstrate putting counters one by one in a row in front of you. It may help to demonstrate by placing counters on an overhead projector so that everyone can see.
2. **So let's count windows. Each time I point at a window, put a counter down in front of you.** Point at windows (or, the second or third times you play this game, some other object in the room) one by one and help students place counters into a row in front of them. If students are able to count out loud as well, that's fine, but it's not essential for this activity.
3. Continue until students are able to count reliably. Count other objects in the room if necessary. If they are already bored of counting, stop here and resume the next day.
4. **Did you know you can also count the words in a sentence? Put your counters back in the cup and I'll show you how. I'm going to say a sentence normally and then slowly. Here's the sentence: My name is [your name]. My...name...is...[your name].** Place a counter for each word. **Now you try. Put down a counter each time I say a word. My...name...is...[your name].** Help students who are not following. You may need to model for them with their counters, then let them try as you say the sentence.
5. **Good! Now put your counters back and let's try another sentence. Let's see...** Choose sentences that involve the students in the group, to help keep them interested. For instance: "Peter stayed home sick." "Melissa is wearing a red shirt."
6. Gradually make the sentences more difficult by (i) increasing the number of multi-syllable words in the sentence, (ii) increasing the length of the sentence, and (iii) decreasing the pauses between words.
7. A common problem is for a student to have difficulty distinguishing a word from a syllable. When this happens, for example, with the word "wearing," ask the student if "wearing" is one word or two. It is best not to introduce the idea of syllables at this point in case you confuse students.
8. When students can count the words in a sentence you say at about normal speed, they have mastered this skill.