

NUMBER TALKS

Number Talks are a relatively new term being used in education circles. It describes the process of helping children to identify different ways a problem could be solved. This process is intended to help students develop their number sense, i.e. their ability to recognise, understand and use the relationship between numbers to solve problems more effectively.

Dots

One way to do a number talk is to show children an image of some dots and ask them to explain what they see. For example, how many dots do you see in Figure 1.

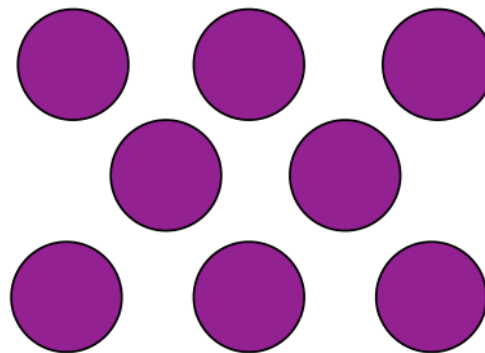


Figure 1: How many dots do you see? (Math for Love, 2020)

| | |
|--|---|
| | I see 5 dots (like on the dice) and 3 more to make 8 dots. |
| | I see a row of 3 dots, then 2 dots, then 3 more to make 8 dots. |
| | I see 2 groups of 3 dots and 2 more to make 8 dots. |

Through this process we can begin to recognise whether children are trusting the count, i.e. are they able to recognise collections (up to 5 dots) or do they need to count by ones to find the total. More dot images and instructions on how to do Number Talks can be found at *Math for Love*:

<https://mathforlove.com/lesson/number-talks/>

Numbers

Another way to do a number talk is to present children with a problem. For example, $9 + 17$. Children are given time to solve the problem, then solutions are shared. For example:

- I know that 10 and 17 is 27, so, then I subtracted 1 to get 26.
- I made the 17 into 20 and did $9 + 20$ is 29, then took away 3
- I put the 17 in my head and used my fingers to count on 9



A discussion can then take place about all the different ways the problem can be solved. Is one method more efficient than the others? Which method works best for you? Would this method always work? What if the numbers were bigger or there were more numbers? A video of Jo Boaler (Stanford University) explaining a number talk can be found here: <https://www.youcubed.org/resources/stanford-onlines-learn-math-teachers-parents-number-talks/>

Other Talks

Really any problem or image could be used as a basis for a *Number Talk*. A collection of images related to fractions can be found on the *Fraction Talks* website: <http://fractiontalks.com/>. More examples of *Number Talks* can be found on Steve Wyborney's blog: <https://steveWyborney.com/>. Also, check out the **AMSI Schools Calculate** website: <https://calculate.org.au/2018/09/14/building-number-sense-through-number-talks/>

For more information to support your child, download the **AMSI Schools Finding the Maths Parent Booklet**: <https://calculate.org.au/2017/11/21/finding-the-maths/>