



Sock Washing Line

Using everyday language to talk about size and position, comparing and ordering by size
Counting in ones and twos



Children often enjoy finding matching pairs and pegging things up.

Adults could provide a collection of socks of different sizes (including dolls, baby and adult socks, long socks and short socks) to sort into pairs.

The Activity

Set up a long washing line with pegs and a washing basket of different size socks, so children can find pairs and peg them up. For this activity the focus is on size and length, rather than colour or pattern, providing opportunities for comparing and ordering. Include some odd socks.

Encouraging mathematical thinking and reasoning:

Describing

Tell me about the socks you've found/sorted out/put on the line already.
Why do you think those aren't a pair?
Where do you think these ones should go?

Reasoning

Have we got room for any more? Have we got enough pegs?
Is that the longest sock? Are you sure?
Why do you think those don't go there?

Opening Out

Have we got enough socks for these dolls for all the class? How can we find out?
What if we order all the socks going from the baby ones to the biggest ones?
Can we count them in 2s? What do you notice when you count in 2s?
How many pairs of baby socks are there?

Recording

Can you think of a way to show how many of each kind of sock we have, so we can check that we haven't lost any?

The Mathematical Journey

Counting

- remembering the number sequence, saying one number for each object
- cardinality -the last number tells you how many there are
- counting in 2s
- counting pairs as units

Pattern

- noticing the alternating pattern when counting in 2s

Measures

- using language to compare size e.g. bigger, smaller, longer, shorter, much (a little) longer/shorter

Shape and space

- using positional language e.g. next to, between, after, before. . .

Development and Variation

Children could peg all the pairs up in size order.

They could find socks for dolls or teddies, or for the members of their families.

They could start a sock shop, pricing the pairs of socks in pounds and paying with plastic pound coins



Resources

A collection of socks, including baby and adult socks, long and short socks, and some odd ones.



Washing line and clothes pegs.

A number line to help children count in 2s.

Acknowledgement: Helen J Williams



nrich.maths.org/early-years
© University of Cambridge

