

License Plate Riddles

Grades 2-4

License plates can be used both to help children develop their knowledge of numbers and as an introduction to algebra.

What You Need

- * License plates
- * Paper
- * Crayons or markers

What to Do

* If you're stuck in traffic, point out the license plate of a car in front of you and ask all family members (except the driver, of course!) to study it closely. Then tell everyone to use the individual numbers on the plate to make the largest three-digit number possible and write it down. For example, if the plate number is 254-116, the largest three-digit number that can be made is 654. Have each person read aloud his or her number. The person with the largest number wins the round. You can change the game by asking everyone to make the smallest three-digit number.

* For your younger child, these activities can be simplified by having them find the largest single or double digit, or even to recognize individual numbers or add all the numbers on the plate.

* Choose a license plate number, for example, 663M218. Then ask your child to use numbers from the plate to solve math problems such as the following:

—add two numbers to get the answer 5. [*answer: $3+2 = 5$*]

—use three numbers to get 5. [*answer: $(3+2) \times 1 = 5$*]

—use four numbers to get 5. [*answer: $(6+3+1) \div 2 = 5$*]

—use five numbers to get 5. [*answer: $(6+6+3) - (8+2) = 5$*]

—use six numbers to get 5. [*answer: $(6+6) + (3 \times 1) - (8+2) = 5$*]

For fun, point out license plates on which numbers are part of a message: ALL 4 1; IML8 (I'm late).