

What Coins Do I Have?

Grades 2-5

Using mathematical reasoning skills to figure out the unknown is good preparation for understanding algebra.

What You Need

- * Coins of different denominations
- * Paper
- * Pen or pencil

What to Do

* Choose coins so that your child can't see, then hold out your closed hand and ask her questions such as the following:

—I have three coins in my hand. They're worth 7 cents. What coins do I have? (*a nickel and 2 pennies*)

—I have three coins in my hand. They're worth 16 cents. What coins do I have? (*a dime, a nickel, a penny*)

—I have three coins in my hand. They're worth 11 cents. What coins do I have? (*2 nickels and 1 penny*)

—I have three coins in my hand. They're worth 30 cents. What coins do I have? (*3 dimes*) Ask your child to tell you how she knows the answer.

* Make the game more challenging by asking questions that have more than one answer:

—I have six coins in my hand. They're worth 30 cents. What coins could I have? (*1 quarter and 5 pennies or 6 nickels*).

—I have coins in my hand that are worth 11 cents. How many coins could I have? (*2—1 dime and 1 penny; 3—2 nickels and 1 penny; 6—1 nickel and 6 pennies; 11—all pennies*) Again, ask your child to tell you how she knows the answer.

You get the idea! Give your child coins to figure out the answers.

Games that involve math should be fun for children, so keep it light!