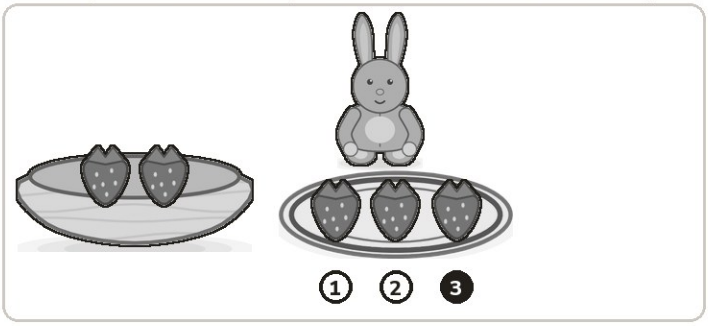
Give me three: helping your child stop at the right number

Parent page · ages 3–4 · goes with the video "Understand the concept"

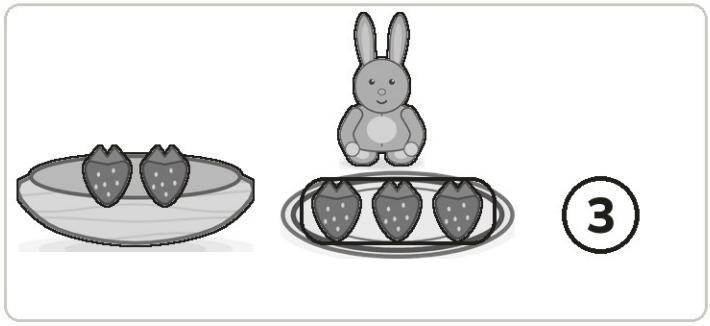
A logical idea

Does your child hand you the whole handful when you ask for three? At this age, "three" can sound like "several." They may know how to give "one," then "two," before they know how to give "three," and even while saying "one, two, three..." they may not know where to stop. It isn't carelessness.

The key idea: count as you set them down, then stop



one, two, three... stop!



three: you gave three

Set the objects down one at a time while saying the numbers, and stop when you say "three." The last number you say also tells how many you gave: three is the whole group. To check, count what the other person received. If there are some left in the bowl, they're for someone else.

Questions instead of corrections

- "How many does the bunny want?"
- "How can we give just three?"
- "How many does the bunny have now?"

After each try: "Is anything missing? Are there too many?"

Safety

An adult stays close by the whole time. Big blocks, too big to fit in a child's mouth; no small objects and no food. Stuffed animals in good condition, with no small parts that could come off. Unbreakable plates. For tidying up: wooden or plastic spoons, never knives or forks. Use a large, non-toxic crayon suitable for your child's age, or let them point. Keep drawing materials out of mouths. An adult cuts out the strip and puts the scissors out of reach.

Page 2, to do together (no reading needed)

- Show the picture at the top: Zoe holds her full bowl of strawberries, and the bunny holds out his plate. Say: "The bunny would like three strawberries. Zoe gives him the whole bowl. What do you think?"
- Rows 1, 2, and 3: you say the request out loud (row 1: "The puppy would like one strawberry," row 2: "The bear would like two strawberries," row 3: "The bunny would like three strawberries"). Your child crosses out with a crayon, or touches with a finger, one strawberry in the bowl for each strawberry they give, one at a time while saying the numbers, and then stops. If they point, you can cross them out for them.
- One row at a time: cover the others with a sheet of paper. Start with row 1; try the other rows another time if your child stays comfortable, or play again with real blocks and a stuffed animal.
- 4. The elephant would like three strawberries in all, and he already has one on his plate. For each strawberry your child adds, they draw a circle on an empty spot on the plate, counting the one that's already there too: "one," then "two, three," and they stop. The plate has more spots than needed. This one is harder: do it together at first.

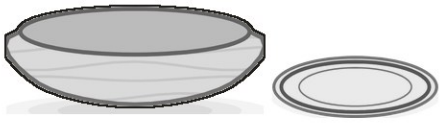
Keep this page out of sight until after the activity. You can also act out each row with real blocks, a stuffed animal, and an unbreakable plate.

For you, after your child has tried

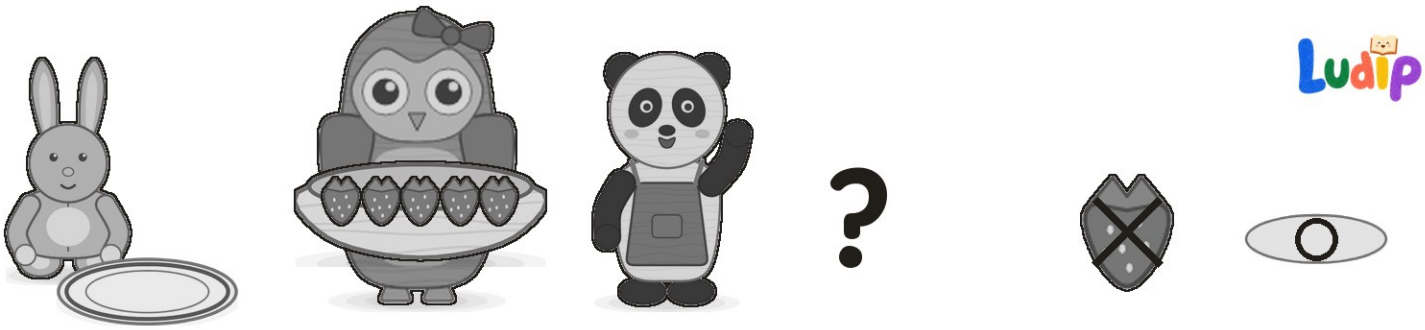
- 1. One strawberry crossed out: three are left in the bowl (bowl of four).
- 2. Two strawberries crossed out: three are left in the bowl (bowl of five).
- 3. Three strawberries crossed out: two are left in the bowl, for the other stuffed animal (bowl of five).
- 4. He had one: two circles to draw to get to three in all; the other spots stay empty.

After trying, can your child show what they gave and count it with you? A good sign: they stop on their own when they say the number asked for. One successful try is a clue, not a certainty. If they still hand over a handful, that's okay: play again another day with smaller numbers.

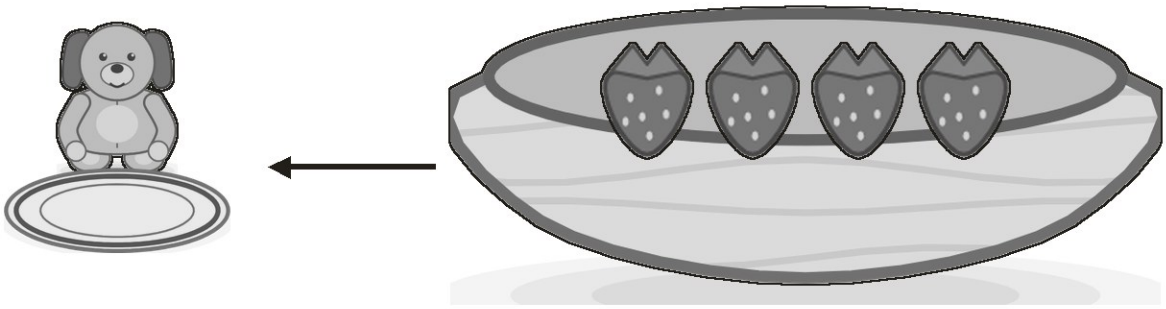
A few days later, without making a big deal of it (adult cuts out)



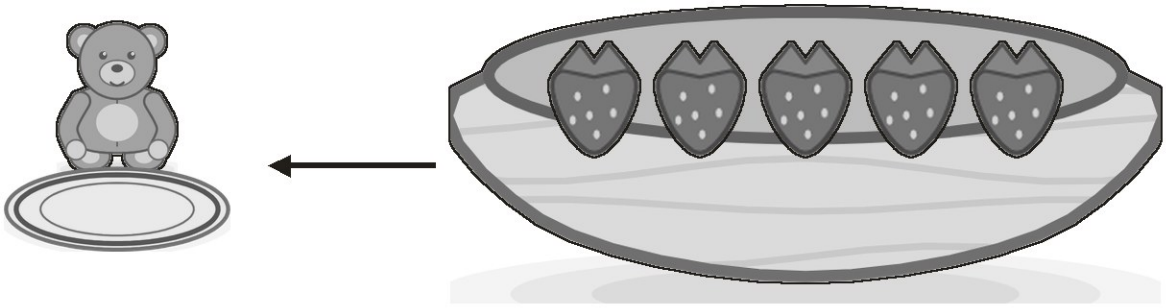
Six big blocks in a bowl. With an adult close by, ask: "Can you give me four?" without suggesting anything. Watch whether they set the blocks down one at a time while saying the numbers, and whether they stop on their own. Then ask: "How many do I have?" If they count again, let them check. If it's too hard, go back down to three.



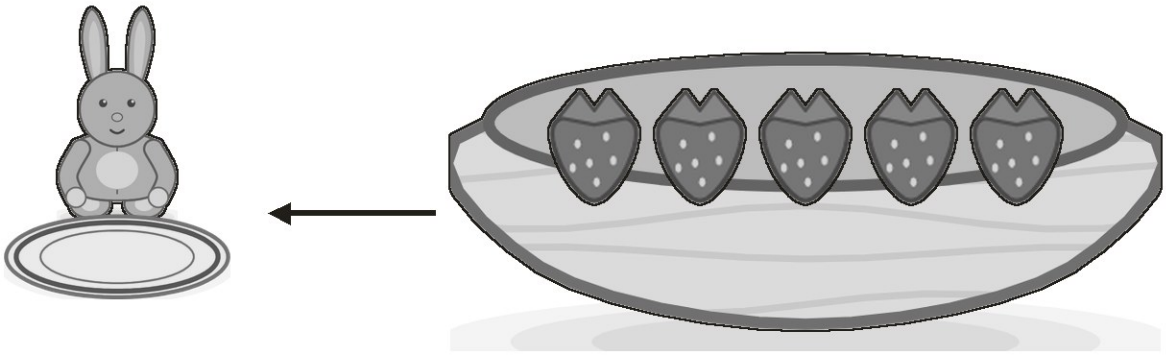
1



2



3



4



