

How Sorting Halloween Candy Can Help Children Develop Mathematical Skills

Sheri-Lynn Skwarchuk, Erin A. Maloney, Heather P. Douglas (2021)

Previous Research

- Informational **mathematics learning opportunities** have important **long-term benefits** for children's mathematical knowledge and confidence.
- **Early exposure** to math content at home predicts children's school mathematics outcomes.
- Using math **every day** helps increase math knowledge.
- Everyday math **keeps** math **learning positive**.

Benefits of Sorting

- Children gain an understanding of the **attributes** of objects.
- Children explore **similarities** and **differences** between objects.
- Children learn to **categorize** objects by size, shape, colour, or brand.

5 Ways to Sort Candy With Children

Sort candy into categories.

For example:
Level 1: **Sort and count** "the **orange** ones"
Level 2: Sort and count **by type** (chocolate bars, chips, gum)
Level 3: Have children **generate** their own categories, like "my favourites," or "peanut free"

Encourage math vocabulary.

Use words such as:

Bigger or **smaller**; **largest** or **smallest**
Size descriptors: tiny, mini, bite-size
Shape descriptors: long, fat, thin, round
Measurement terms: grams, millilitres, centimetres

Make patterns.



Talk about fractions.

For example, say:
"One third of the treats are chocolate bars."
"One half of the treats are lollipops."

Graph the results of sorting.



Key Take Away

Counting and sorting Halloween treats allows children to learn important skills that lay the foundation for higher-level mathematics. Happy counting and sorting this Halloween and beyond!