

Activity Ideas for TTS Metallic Elephant Number and Counting Set 1-10 (EY06519)

Here are some favourite games we play to develop maths skills using the Metallic Elephants. Why not give it a go in your setting or at home!



Many thanks to Sarah Brown for writing this content.

About the Writer... Sarah Brown is an experienced Early Years teacher and leader with expertise in inclusive practice, SEND, communication and language development, and evidence-informed teaching across Nursery, Reception and KS1 settings in London and Manchester.

She is passionate about creating communication-rich, inclusive environments where all children can thrive, particularly those with SEND, EAL and speech and language needs. Her work focuses on high-quality interactions, early language development, self-regulation and practical strategies that support children, families and educators.

Sarah is also the founder of [@thedyslexicleader](https://www.thedyslexicleader.com), a professional platform where she shares accessible ideas, book recommendations and inclusive teaching approaches with educators and families. She regularly contributes to wider professional conversations through webinars, podcasts and speaking engagements, including presenting at the Nursery World Big Day Out 2026.

How many elephants have come for tea?

Resources Needed:

- Metallic Elephants
- Plates
- Dice with numbers 1-3 on (you can use post it notes to cover a 1-6 dice or use dice with pockets)

Learning Intentions/Outcomes

- Counts out an amount from a group
- Recognises numerals to 3
- Understands when to stop at a given number

Game Play

Place elephants in the middle of the table or tray. Provide every person with a plate.

Take turns to roll the dice (with numbers 1-3 on) and children count out that many elephants onto their plate. Finish each turn by saying “I have ... elephants on my plate”.

Key Questions

- Who has the most elephants?
- How many elephants did you count?
- How many elephants would you have if you had 1 more?

Talk Opportunities

Model counting out the amount from the group into a row and double checking by counting the items in the row. Follow up by saying “I have ... items for number ... elephant”

Feed the hungry elephants

Resources Needed:

- Metallic Elephants
- Objects for counting such as counters, gemstones etc
- Number cards (if you can't easily see the number on the elephant)

Learning Intentions/Outcomes

- Counts out an amount to 10
- Recognises who has more/less
- Matches numeral to quantity

Game Play

Set out the elephants in order or out of order. Match a number card to number on the elephant and place all items to be counted out in a pile in the middle.

Take turns to choose a number and count out that many items to feed the elephant with. Place items in a row or line to support counting to check if the amount counted is correct.

Key Questions

- How many items does ... elephant want to eat?
- Which elephant has the most/least items to eat?
- Why do they have the most/least?

Talk Opportunities

Model counting out the amount from the group into a row and double checking by counting the items in the row. Follow up by saying "I have ... items for number ... elephant"

The elephants are hiding...How many can you see?

Resources Needed:

- Metallic Elephants
- Towel or sheet to cover

Learning Intentions/Outcomes

- Subitising within 3 and later within 5

Game Play

Place a number of elephants on the floor or on the table and cover with a towel or sheet.

Remove the sheet and ask children to say how many they can see (use a rhyme to help aid remembering that subitising is not counting). Ask children to reason and talk about what they can see.

Key Questions

- How many elephants can you see?
- How do you know there are that many?
- Why do they have the most/least?
- Is that a bigger or small number than...?

Talk Opportunities

Model subitising with a rhyme such as “say what you can see” or “close your eyes and subitise”.

Use sentence structures such as “... and ... make ...” or “... is made of ... and ...”

Elephant bowling

Resources Needed:

- Metallic Elephants
- Small ball

Learning Intentions/Outcomes

- Counts out an amount
- Subitise to 5
- Subtract one number from a group

Game Play

Stand the Elephants in a triangle formation or a line. Provide a small soft ball to roll at the elephants to see how many get knocked down.

Take turns knocking the elephants down and putting them back together. Count the amount knocked down each time and how many are left.

Key Questions

- How many elephants can you knock down?
- How many are left to knock down?
- What number do you have?

Talk Opportunities

Model talking about what you can see e.g. "Wow I knocked down 5 elephants! I have 5 more to knock down."

Colour sorting

Resources Needed:

- Metallic Elephants
- Objects that are similar or the same colour to the elephants

Learning Intentions/Outcomes

- Organise objects by colour
- Recognises colours and matches items to them

Game Play

Choose 3-4 elephants to colour match items too. Place elephants around and a group of objects in the same or similar colours to the 3-4 elephants chosen.

Place items down all together and allow children to sort items into colours. Discuss why they have put them in the colour groups and what is the same and different between the items.

Key Questions

- How many items match this coloured elephant?
- Can you match the number of items to the number on each elephant?

Talk Opportunities

Share the language of similarity and difference such as “these two objects are the same colour as ... elephant”, “this item is a different colour to ... elephant so it goes here”.

Directional pattern

Resources Needed:

- Metallic Elephants
- Pictures or drawn arrows on paper

Learning Intentions/Outcomes

- Creates an AB pattern (2 part)
- Creates a pattern using direction
- Uses positional language

Game Play

Use the arrows to create a pattern such as arrow up, arrow down, arrow up, arrow down. Then place the elephants facing the way the arrows are to create a directional pattern. Talk through the directions the elephants are facing and how they are facing different ways.

For older children you could even link this to 'turns and angles' sharing that the elephant has turned 90 degrees clockwise or 180 degrees etc.

Key Questions

- Which direction is the elephant pointing?
- Which arrow will come next in the sequence?

Talk Opportunities

Share the language of direction and position such as “the elephants are facing one another. This elephant is pointing right and is next to the elephant pointing left”.

Elephant treasure hunt

Resources Needed:

- Metallic Elephants
- Spaces around the room
- Paper and pens to draw a map of where the elephants are hidden
- A camera and printer to take photos of where the elephants are hidden. Children follow to go and find them

Learning Intentions/Outcomes

- Uses positional language
- Uses a simple map

Game Play

Hide the elephants around the room. Ask children to go and find the 10 elephants (or however many are hidden).

Draw a map and mark on where the elephants are hidden for children to follow and find.

Alternatively, you could take photos of each of the hidden elephants and print them for the children to go and find them.

Key Questions

- Where is this elephant?
- Can you follow the map to find the elephant?

Talk Opportunities

Use talk to describe the position of the elephants e.g. “the pink elephant is under the small table”, “the blue elephant is behind the chair”.