

# Wolfie Wolf! An Outdoor Math Game

By the start of first grade, your child should be able to count easily from 1 to 12, backward and forward, and should understand that every number on that line represents something concrete. In addition, the teacher will probably have introduced the basic concept of hourly time. Now, the words for the numbers themselves are also part of the core curriculum, and teachers want kids to recognize and read them by sight. Here's a delightful playground game that puts all three levels of learning together with running, shouting and laughing—activities that are pretty much irresistible for kids of all ages!

## What You Need:

- Open space for running
- Energetic first graders
- 12 pieces of 12x18" construction paper
- Thick black marker



## What to Do:

1. To set up the game, take out your 12 pieces of construction paper. On one side of each piece, write out the name of a number (one, two, three, and so on) in very large, clear block letters. On the back of each paper (held horizontally), write the number itself—again in very large, very clear block letters.
2. Taking your numbers with you, stand at one end of an open space, and have the children stand at the far end—far enough to be a sprint away, but not so far that they can't see your signs.
3. From this point forward, you are the "Wolf", and the children are your innocent "lambs". Have them start the game by asking you, "Wolfie Wolf, what time is it?"
4. Hold up a written number, and have the kids take that number of steps forward. When they've stopped, put down your sign and pretend to be inattentive or asleep. They'll ask again, "Wolfie Wolf, what time is it?" and again you hold up a sign. If they get too close, show a card with the numeral side out—that means they must take that many steps back.
5. Keep going for several more "steps," forward and back, until your little lambies seem to be lulled. Then when they ask "what time is it?" give them a surprise. Shout, "Time for Dinner!" and take off chasing them! If you "catch" a child first, she can be "Wolfie" next time. If she gets to your home base first, she wins—and you're still the Wolfie!

**What's Going On:** For experienced readers and mathematicians, it's easy to forget how many kinds of pathways kids need to use in order to understand words and numbers. Activities like "Wolfie" allow kids to put sight and sound together with "kinesthetic" learning—knowledge that comes through physical experience. It's powerful learning . and powerful fun at the same time!

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