

Craft a Cereal Abacus

Your child probably tires of the monotony of flash cards and workbooks quickly, but she'll be fooled by this colorful, interactive counting box! Moving cereal pieces across wires with her fingers hardly seems like math practice, yet she will be perfecting her counting out loud. Addition and subtraction, pattern work, and making groups with the cereal will invigorate her arithmetic skills in a fun and painless way!

What You Need:

- Small, sturdy shoe box
- O-shaped cereal in assorted colors
- Floral cloth wire (8 gauge) cut to fit the width of the box
- Wire cutter
- Tape
- Hot glue gun
- Craft glue, wrapping paper, plain paper, and markers or paint to decorate the outside of the box (all optional)



What You Do:

1. Carefully lift the sealed side edges of the shoe box, creating a flap under which you can tuck the floral cloth wire ends so that they are not visible.
2. Bend the tip of the wire at approximately 1" from the top.
3. Have your child string ten pieces of cereal onto it, counting out loud as she goes.
4. Bend the other end of the cloth wire so that both sides tuck underneath the unsealed edge of the box.
5. Tape the 1" ends of wire to the sides of the box, making sure that the rows are evenly spaced and parallel.
6. Repeat steps 2–5 until you have five rows of cereal strung on wire (or more, if you are using a larger box).
7. Use a hot glue gun to seal both flaps down over the floral wire. Hold the flaps down until the glue sets.
8. If she wishes, your child can glue decorated paper or colorful wrapping paper onto the top and sides of the box.

To keep the counting box free of dust when not in use, simply cover it with the shoe box lid.

Suggestion: Sing counting songs with your child as she manipulates the cereal. Examples: "Five Little Monkeys," "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe," or "This Old Man." Or, create your own counting rhyme, such as this:

"One red o rolled over there,
Two red o's make a pretty pair,
Three red o's add up to a few,
Four red o's, two for me and two for you;
Five red o's, lined up in a row,
Six red o's, half a dozen, you know;
Seven red o's dancing on a wire,
Eight red o's for us to admire,
Nine red o's looking mighty yummy,

Ten red o's would be nice in my tummy."
(Pretend to gobble up the cereal).

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