

Mathematical moments: 4 & 5 year olds

**Counting, grouping and writing numbers.
Choosing organised ways to approach a
problem, making links to previous experience.**

Zelda posed the following scenario to her reception children:

Sam has been asked to sort out his pens and find out how many he has altogether. He keeps getting in a muddle even though he has tried lining them up and tried moving them as he counts because his little brother keeps distracting him. His adult has given him some paper and some elastic bands. I wonder why? Can you help him?

J immediately started bundling the pencils and putting them in bands.

Z: I can see that you are putting the pencils into smaller groups.

J tried counting how many he had in each elastic band. He thought about it for a while then:

J: I know – count them in 2s.

J counted them in 2s up to 10 then got distracted by another child.

Z: That was a really good idea you had for counting so many pens quickly. I wonder if it would help if we could find a way to keep track of how many we had so far.

J: Save them

He started moving them in 2s to the side. Then he stopped.

J: Put the numbers on the paper!

J wrote 1,2,3,4,5,6 and then counted along in 1s putting a pencil under each numeral. He then continued to count the pens. Zelda left J to see how some other children were getting on.

A little later J came to find her with two bundles of 5.

J: 5 and 5 is 10.

She went to see how J would continue. He had put bundles of 5 together.

J: This one is 10 and this is another 10. That's 20.

At this point J was ready to move on and disappeared into the garden!



P: *We've got so many!*



Z: *Hmm, I wonder how we could count these quickly and accurately so we don't lose track.*

J reappeared and came over to show her his bundles of 5.

B: *We can count in 5s!*

P: *I know, we can put the band like this.*

The girls started counting them and putting them in bands.

Z: *Putting them in groups of 5 is such a good idea. You'll be able to find out how many very quickly.*

P: *We could put them in 10s. It'll be quicker!*

Z: *What a lot of pens to count and keep track of. I like to jot down things when I am trying to remember something.*

P: *And then we can put them down here and write 10 20 30 40 50.*

B: *We've got 2 left over.*

P: *That's OK; we can put them together at the end.*

With thanks to Zelda Tooley and her Reception children, Camelford Primary School, Cornwall.

