

# Montessori Math Activity: Counting & Skip-Counting with Bead Chains

**Age Group:** 3–6 years

**Objective:**

To help young children build a strong sense of numbers, patterns, and early skip-counting in a concrete and joyful way.

**Materials:**

- Montessori short bead chains (2s, 3s, 4s, 5s, etc.)
- Number arrows or labels (2, 4, 6 ... for the 2-chain; 3, 6, 9 ... for the 3-chain, etc.)
- A floor mat for laying out the materials



**Instructions:**

1. **Introduction:** Invite the child to roll out a mat and choose a bead chain (start with 2s or 3s for younger children).
2. **Counting Together:** Lay the bead chain flat on the mat. Slowly count each bead with the child, touching each bead as you say the number.
3. **Skip-Counting:** Next, show the child how to “jump” along the chain—counting by 2s or 3s instead of ones. For example, “2, 4, 6, 8...” while pointing to each group of beads.
4. **Number Labels:** Place number arrows at each “stop” along the chain (2, 4, 6 ...). This helps the child visually connect the quantity of beads with the



written numeral.

5. **Discovery:** Ask gentle questions like, *“What do you notice about the numbers?”* or *“Does the chain get longer as we go?”* Encourage curiosity rather than giving “right answers.”

#### **Why It Works for 3–6:**

- **Concrete to abstract:** Children see and touch the beads before they ever learn multiplication facts.
- **Pattern recognition:** Early exposure to skip-counting builds the foundation for multiplication and division later.
- **Joyful engagement:** Children love the colorful beads and the sense of discovery when numbers “grow” across the chain.

#### **Extensions for Older 5–6 Year Olds:**

- Use longer chains (like the chain of 5 or 10) to explore higher numbers.
- Invite the child to notice how skip-counting connects to familiar ideas (like days of the week, fingers, or counting steps).

