

Subitizing

Subitizing is the ability to 'see' a small amount of objects and know how many there are without counting. Subitizing is what tells you what number you roll on a six sided dice - most adults no longer have to count the pips after playing board games for a while.

Subitizing is a fundamental skill in the development of students' understanding of number (*Baroody 1987, 115*). Students use patterns recognized to discover properties and skills such as conservation, compensation, unitizing, counting on, composing and decomposing numbers, as well as understanding of arithmetic and place value.

The ability to subitize can be developed, and uses a student's pattern recognition skills. Part part whole understanding is usually used to subitize numbers over four or five. This means a student looking at this pattern doesn't usually see 7, but instead 1 and 6, or maybe 2 and 5.

This is one of the reasons larger patterns shouldn't be used until students are familiar with various representations of numbers 1 to 5. When two colours are used in patterns, they also draw attention to smaller anchors and make the parts more obvious.

<http://teachmath.openschoolnetwork.ca/Subitizing.htm>