



Stuart J. Murphy's
MathStart[®]

3 Little Firefighters
Level 1 / Ages 3+
Sorting



Sorting by attributes lays the groundwork for understanding number patterns and identifying geometric shapes.

Story Description

It's parade day for the 3 little firefighters and they have to look their best. But their coats are missing buttons and their belly buttons show! Time to get out the button box. Each coat will need 4 buttons. They try to sort them by color, and then by shape, but they can't make enough sets. What if they try sorting by size instead? Ink Spot the dog wants to help! Sorting by attributes lays the groundwork for understanding number patterns and identifying geometric shapes.

Illustrated by Bernice Lum.

DC Standard 4.4, Geometry and Spatial

Sense: Children begin to demonstrate an understanding of shape, size, position, direction, and movement, and they describe and classify real objects by shape.

Activities

- Read the story with your child or students and point out the buttons on each of the firefighter's coats. Ask the children how the buttons on each coat are alike and how they are different.
- Write down the first name of family members or classmates on separate cards. Together with the children, sort the names. Ask what rule the children want to use for sorting. For example, by the length of the name, or the gender of the name.
- Button Game: Gather a collection of buttons of different sizes, shapes, and colors, and a piece of paper with a circle drawn on it. The first player creates a set of buttons (for example, all round or all red) and places them inside the circle. The second player must then guess the rule by which they were sorted.
- Teacher Idea:** I presented "3 Little Firefighters" in a workshop. I created oaktag buttons for everyone in the workshop and magnetized them with a Xyron machine. As I read the story, everyone sorted their buttons the way the firefighters were sorting theirs.
— Carol Hartrey, bookseller, *The Learning Tree Store*, Stoneham, NH



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