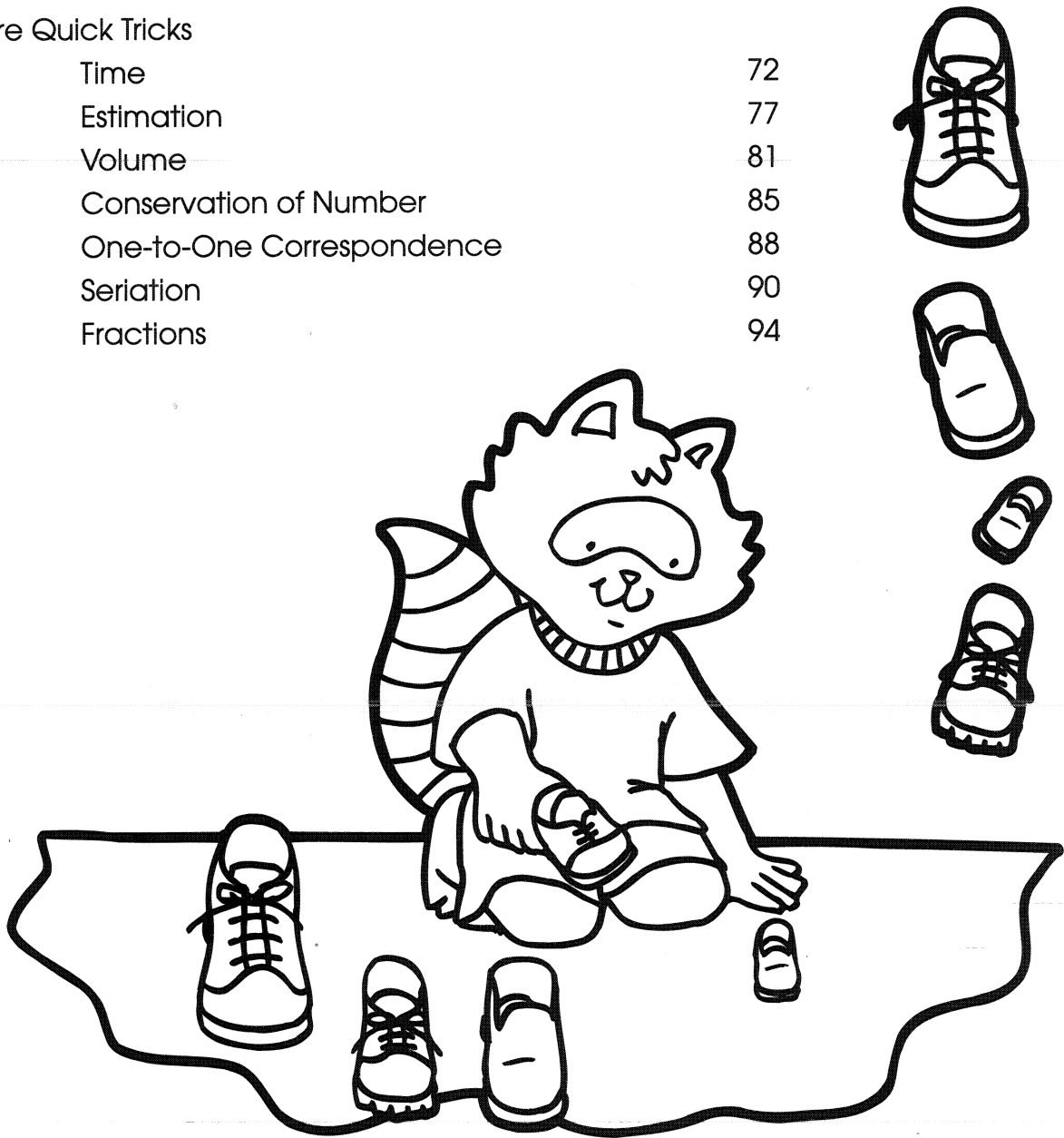


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INTRODUCTION

Maths is all around us, offering opportunities for exploration and play. We count the petals on a flower and measure sunflowers. We estimate the number of beetles under a rock, then we count to check our estimate. We collect gumnuts and divide them among friends, count family members to see how many cupcakes to buy, and compare sunflowers and marigolds to see how they are the same and how they are different. We count the number of days until Grandma's visit and we watch the numbers spin at the petrol pump.

Children who have the opportunity to play with mathematical concepts grow into adults who enjoy maths. Engineers, pharmacists, cooks, repair experts, taxi drivers—all of us use maths every day in our work. We determine how long it takes to get to the airport, how to double a soup recipe and how many days until pay day.

The maths activities in this book are designed around children's interests. Preschool children learn best from hands-on experiences with learning materials. Therefore, the children will be encouraged to talk and be excited about the learning and they will manipulate items to learn more about their mathematical qualities.

These "Quick Tricks" are meant to be enjoyed in a casual, informal setting and atmosphere. The emphasis is on having a mathematical experience, not in getting a right or wrong answer. If children come up with incorrect information, ask them how they figured that out. Perhaps you can suggest another way to explore. Remember that young children's brains have not finished developing. They are concrete thinkers and their way of looking at things is different from adults' methods. Through repetition of activities like those in this book, children build their knowledge and their problem-solving abilities.

Everyday materials and your enthusiasm are all that are needed for these games. Only a few activities require advance preparation.

Although you can use the activities in this book in any order, they are arranged with early chapters building skills needed for concepts in the later chapters. For example, a child who cannot recognise numerals cannot successfully play a game where he is to put five items in a bag labelled with the numeral 5.

Most chapters include a letter for parents. The letters inform parents of what their children are learning in school and offer a Quick Trick for continuing the learning at home. To keep the language simple, chapters alternate between referring to children as "he" or "she".

