

How to Learn about the Pattern of Number Using Straws (limited to hundreds)

1. Empty a box of straws (less than one thousand) onto the floor .
2. Stick two lines of masking tape onto the floor, one either side of the pile of straws, and place a card above the pile with the label “Ones” written on it.
3. Draw up a table on a white board to record student estimates.
4. Ask students to estimate the number of straws.
5. Write the students’ estimations in both words (eg “three hundred and twenty seven”) and numerals (eg “327”).
6. Ask students to count straws into groups of ten, and secure each group with a rubber band.
7. When as many straws as possible have been bundled, place the bundles of ten in a pile to the left of the ‘Ones’ column (the few left-over single straws should remain in the Ones column). Stick a line of masking tape onto the floor to the left of the pile of tens, and place a card above the pile with the label “Tens” written on it.
8. Ask students to count the bundles into groups of ten, and secure each large group formed with a rubber band.
9. When as many “Tens” as possible have been bundled, place the bundles of hundreds in a pile to the left of the ‘Tens’ column (the few left-over ‘Tens’ should remain in the Tens column). Stick a line of masking tape onto the floor to the left of the pile of hundreds, and place a card above the pile with the label “Hundreds” written on it.
10. With the students, count the number of bundles (or straws for the ‘Ones’) in each column and write the numeral on a piece of card which is then placed at the base of that column.
11. Write the numerals displayed at the base of the columns as a number on the whiteboard. For example, if there were three bundles of one hundred, two bundles of ten and seven single straws, the numerals 3, 2 and 1 would be displayed from left to right beneath the columns. This should be written on the whiteboard as the number ‘327’.
12. Write the number of straws in words, asking for the students to help. For example 327 would be written as three hundred and twenty seven.
13. Work with the students to determine who’s estimate was closest to the total number of straws.
14. Practice reading both the word number and the numerical representation with the students.
15. Repeat the activity, as a class or in small groups, with different numbers of straws to help students to learn the pattern, and to learn how numbers are read and written in different ways.