

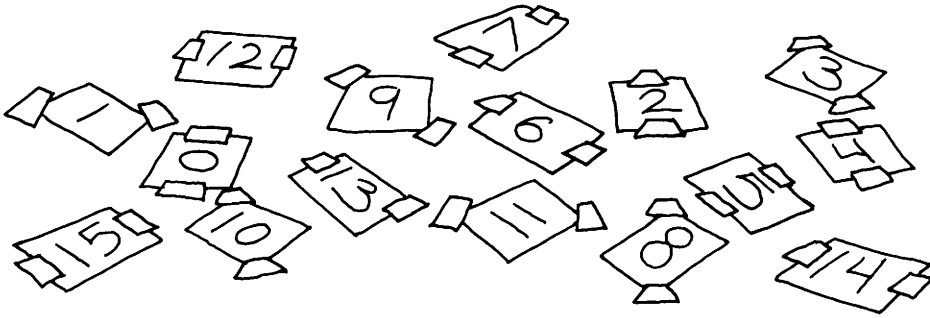
# GRASS- HOPPER

**D**oris didn't sit in her chair; she swayed. She didn't walk around the classroom; she bounced. Not surprisingly, Doris liked active games, and GRASSHOPPER was her favorite.

Before starting to play GRASSHOPPER, we needed empty floor space for jumping around. That meant pushing aside a table and a few chairs. We also needed a handful of index cards. Sixteen are enough to start a game. On each card I wrote one of the numbers from zero to fifteen. Then we taped the cards, hopping distance apart, in haphazard fashion across the floor.

**GRADES**  
one and two

**MATERIALS**  
index cards  
pen  
masking tape



Doris liked helping with these preparations, but she liked it even more when I barked out a series of instructions:

“All right, Doris, be a grasshopper and hop onto the five. Good. Now, find the number that’s one less than five. Go ahead, hop onto it. Skip to the number that’s one more than twelve. Can you get to eight in one jump? Great! How about twirling to the number that’s one less than fifteen? Now, count backwards from fourteen to seven and hop onto each number as you go.”

Sometimes I let Doris bark the orders, and I hopped. In fact, the game worked wonderfully when we took turns ordering each other about. I told Doris to jump to three. She told me to jump to one less than eight. Back and forth we ordered and jumped until one of us, generally me, declared enough was enough. For the most part, I was an accurate hopper. But I promised Doris that I would make occasional bloopers. Once Doris told me to skip to one less

than twelve, and I pounced on ten. Since Doris enjoyed catching my mis-hops, she was careful to calculate the correct answer to each of her commands.

After a while, Doris was pretty secure from zero through fifteen, so I made a new set of cards. This time I used twenty-one cards numbered five to twenty-five. Some days I put out cards from zero to twenty-five, other days, twenty-five to fifty. Once, I even made a set of high-numbered cards that had us hopping from one hundred to one hundred twenty.

This gymnastic workout gave Doris some good math experiences. Hopping around made for lots of practice in recognizing numbers. Young children can find it hard to remember that the word *twenty-one* goes with the figure 21, while the word *twelve* goes with 12. Grand numbers like 87 or 103 can also throw them for a loop. GRASSHOPPER gave Doris practice. The game also helped her relate each number to its neighbor. When I ordered Doris to hop to the number that is one more than eleven, she had to think about the number eleven, count one number past, and end up at twelve. At first this was difficult for her. She couldn't just say "eleven, twelve." Instead she counted from one to eleven before pouncing on twelve.

But the more we played GRASSHOPPER—the more she heard me count, and the more counting she did herself—the more sophisticated Doris became. Soon she was counting directly from eleven, not to mention from twelve or from one hundred.

If you have a hoppy child who can use help in recognizing numbers, and who needs practice starting to count from numbers other than one, then GRASSHOPPER is the game for you. Happy hopping!