

What comes next?

Ages 4–7 with a grown-up · 5–10 minutes · Find a repeating pattern

<https://kiddos.ai/explorations/benny-everyday-detectives/what-comes-next>

Wonder together

Spoon. Napkin. Spoon. Napkin.

Materials

Three large wooden spoons. Three folded napkins or small cloths, all folded the same way. A stable clear surface.

Adult setup – read before trying

Adult sets out spoon, napkin, spoon, napkin in a left-to-right row. Adult selects large safe objects and a stable reachable surface. No glass, sharp items, small loose parts, blindfolds or climbing. Looking, pointing and directing an adult are welcome. No speed test or required spoken response.

Try together

1. Adult sets out spoon, napkin, spoon, napkin in a left-to-right row.
2. Say or point to the repeating pair together: spoon, napkin.
3. Child adds the next spoon, then a napkin. Compare the repeated pairs.
4. Swap roles. Child makes a new two-kind pattern with the same large safe objects; adult continues it.
5. Ask which part repeats. If a different rule was intended, let the child show it rather than marking a guess wrong.

Keep the comparison clear

Keep fixed: one straight row read left to right; wooden spoon design; folded yellow napkin design; camera and surface.

What changes: Append one spoon to the four-item repeat, then one napkin to continue it.

Look for: The shown pattern is spoon, napkin, spoon, napkin, spoon; a napkin continues this repeating pair. Other invented rules are possible, but this episode explicitly asks for the shown spoon–napkin repeat.

Explain with care

Find the two-object part that repeats and use it to continue a pattern. The shown pattern is spoon, napkin, spoon, napkin, spoon; a napkin continues this repeating pair. Other invented rules are possible, but this episode explicitly asks for the shown spoon–napkin repeat.

This story asks for the shown spoon–napkin repeating pair. A child may invent another rule; ask them to show it before judging their continuation.

Talk about it

What is the little part that repeats?

Answer cue: A spoon followed by a napkin.

What follows a spoon in this pattern?

Answer cue: A napkin.

How can we check the next two things?

Answer cue: Look back at the spoon–napkin pairs already in the row.

A parent move: Name the repeating part with the child, then let them be the pattern maker.

Start simply: Keep just two complete pairs visible and place the two next objects nearby as choices.

Explore further: Use a different two-object pair, or let the child make spoon–spoon–napkin with enough large safe objects. Say the new rule before continuing.

Return to it: Try the same game another day with one adult-approved change. Ask what helped you notice this time.

In the classroom

Flexible 15-minute small-group sequence; prepare materials first, and shorten or pause as needed.

2 min · Notice

Introduce the question and invite a first idea.

4 min · Read and compare

Read the clues and pause before the reveal; compare together.

6 min · Try together

Model the household game, then let pairs take turns with adult-selected objects.

3 min · Show your thinking

Show the spoon–napkin unit and continue the next complete pair. Accept pointing, showing or directing an adult; an informal observation, not a score.

Understanding check

Show the spoon–napkin unit and continue the next complete pair.

Answer guidance: The shown pattern is spoon, napkin, spoon, napkin, spoon; a napkin continues this repeating pair. Other invented rules are possible, but this episode explicitly asks for the shown spoon–napkin repeat.

Participation choices: Accept pointing, showing, words in a home language or directing an adult. Keep just two complete pairs visible and place the two next objects nearby as choices.

Words to explore

pattern — A rule or part that happens again.

repeat — Do the same part again.

Full adult notes and honest limits

Name the repeating part with the child, then let them be the pattern maker.

This story asks for the shown spoon–napkin repeating pair. A child may invent another rule; ask them to show it before judging their continuation.

These are shared activities inspired by Benny’s story world. Suggested ages and times are editorial starting points; they are not standardized assessments or measured learning outcomes.

Related reading

Meet Benny in Benny the Forest Detective, an interactive Little Clue Tales forest mystery about noticing clues, counting, matching, sequencing and sharing. This household game is a new carousel activity, not a page or experiment from the book. Browse Kiddos Books for the digital story and Amazon for the physical titles currently available; this link does not promise a matching paperback.

Scientific sources

NAEYC — Making Math Meaningful for Young Children —
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/oct2014/making-math-meaningful>

NAEYC / NCTM — Early Childhood Mathematics — <https://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/mathematics>

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