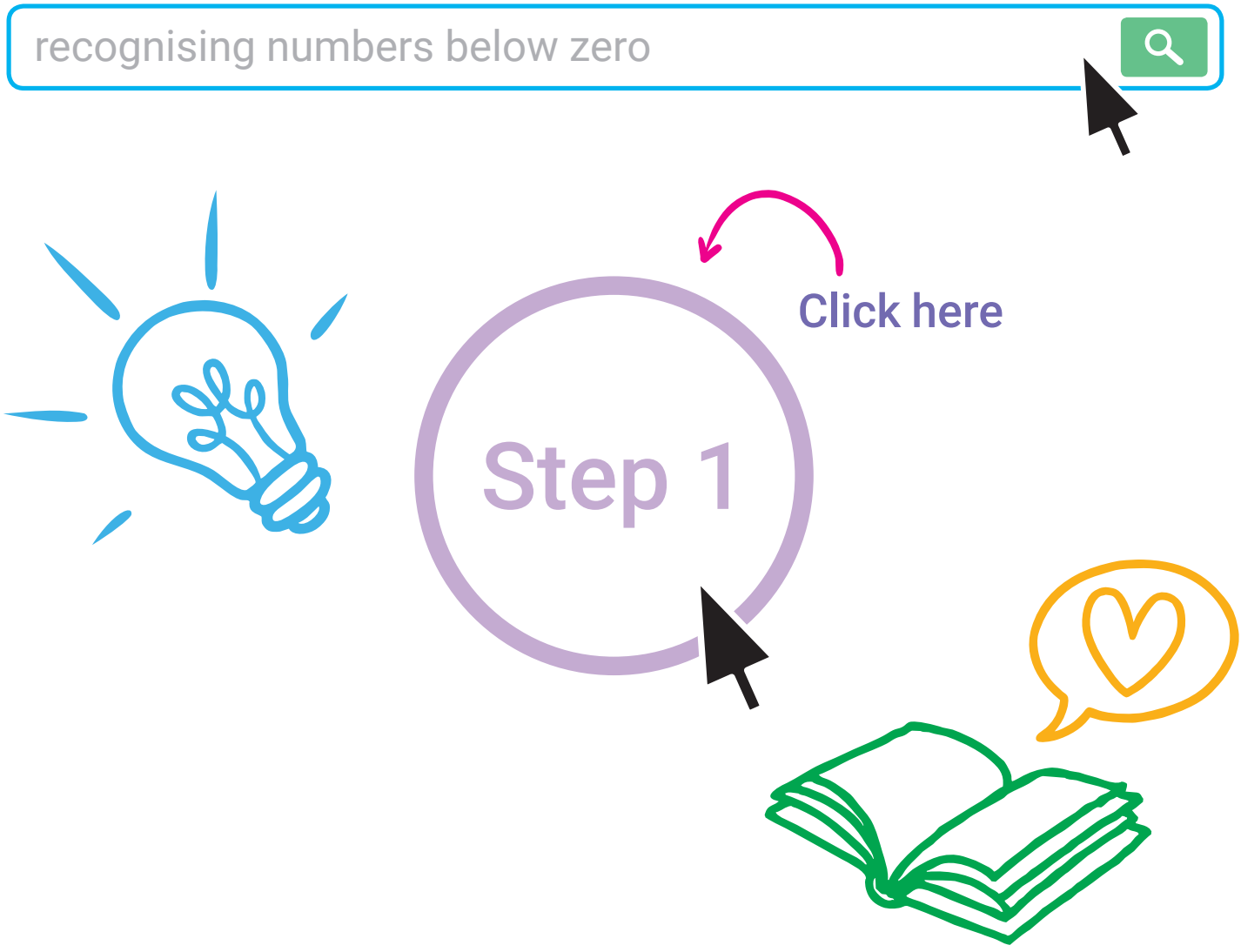
Year 4 Negative Numbers: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents

This step-by-step explanation to year 4 negative numbers can help you support your child's learning at home. The subject is broken down into manageable chunks, providing you with a simple guide to follow when learning about year 4 negative numbers, either to support your child's homework or if you decide to give your child some extra support. In this guide, you will find a step that matches your child's level of understanding and then have suggested activities which can be used to support that step.

Within **this area of the website**, you will find a selection of resources intended to help your child learn about each step of this guide. Each step also contains a keyword or phrase that you can use to search the Twinkl site for more resources and activities, designed to support your child in achieving that stage. Simply type the keyword or phrase into the search bar and press enter to explore together.



We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. The contents of this resource are for general, informational purposes only. This guide is intended to offer parents general guidance on what subject areas tend to be covered in their child's year group and where they could support their children at home. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. There are some subject areas that we have intentionally not covered due to the nature of how they are taught or because a trained professional needs to teach these areas. We try to ensure that the information in our resources is correct but every school teaches the national curriculum in its own way. If you would like further guidance or are unsure in any way, we recommend that you speak to your child's teacher or another suitably qualified professional.

Negative Numbers

What Are Negative Numbers?

A negative number is a number that is less than zero. When counting backwards, we don't stop at zero, but we go into negative numbers. They are often used when taking the temperature but can be used in other contexts, too, such as underground floors in a building or a car park. Negative numbers are written the same way as positive numbers (numbers that are above 0) but they have a minus sign placed in front of them e.g. -4, -5, -6, -7.

What Are Children Taught about Negative Numbers in Year 4?

By the end of year 4, children are expected to be able to:

- count backwards below zero to include negative numbers e.g. 3, 2, 1, 0, -1, -2, -3.

Children are also expected to be able to apply the above to number problems and practical problems.

This guide will help you support the learning of year 4 negative numbers at home. Each step contains an explanation to that stage and a link to an appropriate resource which can be used at home to support your child's learning.

As well as using the resources in this category and the keyword searches to help your child, below are a few ideas for games and activities to help your child practise at home.

Counting Backwards

This is a simple activity that can be done anytime. Simply practise counting backwards together (starting with 10) but when you get to zero, carry on counting through negative numbers. For example: -1, -2, -3, -4. This can help your child practise using negative numbers.

Temperature Taking

This can be a fun activity to help your child practise using negative numbers in context. For this, you will need a thermometer. With your child, record the temperature in your freezer, the fridge and a room in the home. Discuss how to read the thermometer and the differences in temperature around your home. This skill can help them when reading thermometers in school. You could also keep a winter temperature chart, taking the outside temperature each day together and recording the results to find out how many days the temperature fell below zero degrees.

Say the Next Number

This simple activity builds on counting negative numbers together but, in this instance, you take it in turns. Explain to your child that you are going to count backwards together. Then, say a number such as 2. Take it in turns at saying the next number in the sequence e.g. 2, 1, 0, -1, -2, -3. This can help your child think carefully about negative numbers in a sequence. You can also challenge your child by counting backwards in different steps, such as 2: 2, 0, -2, -4, -6.

Make a Negative Number line

This involves making a large line of negative numbers in sequence which your child can practise counting backwards and forwards on by hopping along the line and saying each number in the sequence. There are several ways you could make this such as: drawing it out in chalk on the driveway or garden; sticking lots of sheets of paper together in a line, each with the next number in the sequence; making foam tiles with the numbers in the sequence etc.

Step 1

Recognising Numbers below Zero

A negative number is a number that is less than zero. When counting backwards, we don't stop at zero, but we go into negative numbers. They are written like positive numbers with a minus sign placed before each number. Positive numbers are those above zero and negative numbers are below zero:

Positive numbers: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5...

Negative numbers: -1, -2, -3, -4, -5...

In school, diagrams and number lines are often used to introduce the concept of negative numbers. At home, you can look at a thermometer and discuss the negative numbers on it and how they show temperatures colder than zero (the point at which water freezes). You can use this **Positive and Negative Numbers Poster** to help your child understand what happens if you count backwards from zero. Take it in turns to do this to help your child practise counting forwards and backwards using negative numbers. When counting to your child, you could miss out a negative number and see if they can spot the number you have missed.

Step 2

Counting Back through Zero

When counting back through zero, children are taught to continue counting backwards using negative numbers rather than stop. For example, when counting back from 3, the sequence would be: 3, 2, 1, 0, -1, -2, -3 and so forth. In school, number lines are often used to support children when they first begin to use negative numbers. At home, you can practise counting backwards through zero using this **Counting Back Past Zero Using Negative Numbers Worksheet**. Your child can use the negative number lines on the worksheet to help them count backwards through zero.

Step 3

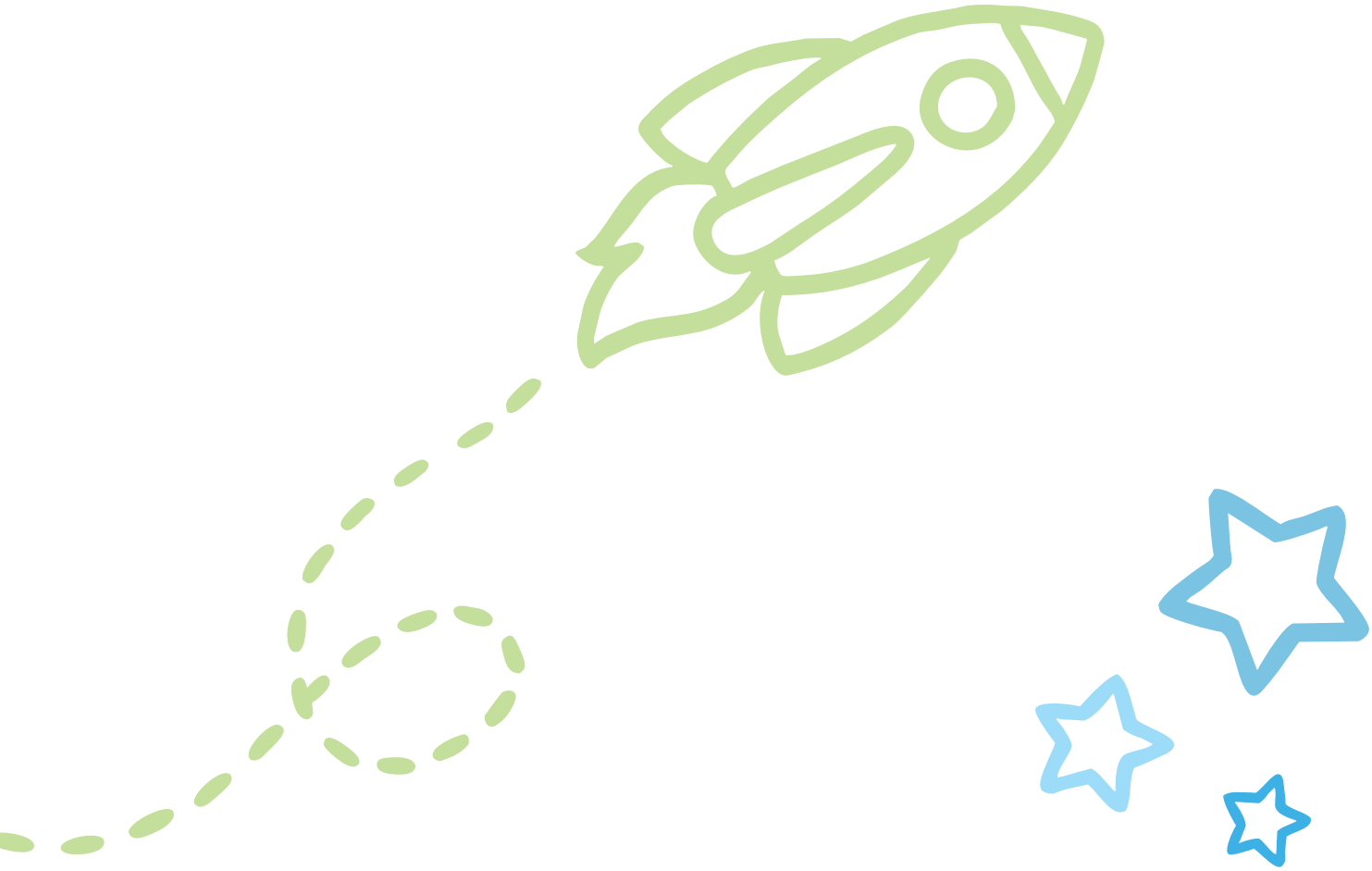
Missing Negative Numbers

Once children are familiar with negative numbers, the next challenge is to use this knowledge to complete missing numbers on a number line. Create a number line on paper and then cover up numbers where your child cannot see what has been covered. Ask your child to complete the missing negative number. Extend this by covering up more than one number, and numbers next to one another. Extend even further by only writing e.g. -2, -4, -6, -8 on the line, and then covering up one of these.

Step 4

Solving Negative Number Problems

In school, teachers encourage children to develop 'mastery in maths'. Here, this is the ability to use their understanding of, and confidence with, negative numbers to solve problems. In class, children will be presented with a variety of problems to help them develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in maths. At home, you can try using these **Negative Number Challenge Cards** with your child, working with them to solve the problems.



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Twinkl Boost is a range of intervention resources, created to support and lift learning with children at every level. These include our easy-to-use SATs and Phonics Screening resources.

Imagine resources are designed to help your children to think creatively, question and imagine. Every week, a new topic consisting of five photos, each with related activities, is created.

Twinkl Originals are engaging stories written to inspire children from EYFS to KS2. Designed to encourage a love of reading and help curriculum-wide learning through accompanying resources.

Twinkl Kids' TV is our wonderful YouTube channel dedicated to fun and informative video-style resources full of new and creative activities you can try at home!