



TallyTots

Meet the Cast

Standard Edition

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 4 chapter books from the TallyTots cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The TallyTots cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 4 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Ribbet

the mental number line (farther along = more)



Ribbet was a little green frog who lived by a row of lily pads. The pads sat in a line across the pond — pad one, then two, then three, all the way to the far, far pad. Ribbet loved to hop along them and say each number out loud.



"One!" Ribbet hopped to the first pad. "Two!" A hop farther. "Three!" Farther still. Each hop carried her a little more along the line. The bigger the number, the farther from home she landed — and the farther she looked back and grinned.



One day two beetles raced. One stopped on pad two. One stopped on pad five. "Who went farther?" they asked. Ribbet looked down the line. Pad five was way past pad two. "Five is farther," she said, "so five is more." The beetle on five did a happy wiggle.



Ribbet's favorite trick was *one more*. If she sat on pad four and hopped once, she landed on five — one step bigger. If she hopped again, six. Each single hop moved her one pad up the line, one number bigger. Farther along always meant more.



When the sun went down, Ribbet sat on the highest pad she'd reached all day and looked back at the long line of pads behind her. She had started at one and hopped so far. Her legs were tired and her heart was proud. Every hop had taken her one more, and one more, all the way to *here*.

"Look how far I went," she whispered to the pond. And the pond, full of quiet ripples, seemed to agree.

Dottie

subitizing — recognizing small quantities instantly, without counting



Dottie was a small red ladybug with spots on her back. But Dottie's spots were special: they could change. And she had a magic trick — she could tell how many spots she had just by *looking*, quick as a blink, without ever counting one-two-three.



"Watch!" said Dottie. She flashed her back. Two spots. "Two!" she said right away. She didn't count. Her eyes just knew. Two looked like *two*, all at once.



Her friends wanted to try. Dottie flashed three spots, just for a moment, then tucked them away. "How many?" A caterpillar blinked. "Three!" Right! Three little spots make a shape your eyes remember. You don't have to touch each one — you just see it.



Then Dottie flashed four, then five. Those were a little trickier. Sometimes she saw them as two-and-two, or a four-with-one-more. "That's a good trick," she told her friends. "Break the big group into little groups your eyes already know." Everyone practiced, flashing and guessing, flashing and guessing.



At the end of the day, Dottie flashed her spots to the setting sun — two, then three, then a quick, proud five. Each time, her friends called the number out fast, before she could hide it. Their eyes were getting quicker.

Dottie glowed, warm and pleased. Seeing how many in a blink felt like a tiny bit of magic — and now everyone could do it.

Wriggle

successor — adding one makes the next number; taking one makes the number before



Wriggle was a caterpillar made of little round segments, all in a row. When Wriggle ate a leaf, something wonderful happened: a brand-new segment popped on at the end. One more bite, one more segment. Wriggle loved counting the new number.



"Three segments," Wriggle said one morning, wiggling each one. Then — munch! — a leaf, and *pop*, a new segment. "Now four!" Adding one had made the very next number. Three, then one more, then four. It always worked that way.



Sometimes a segment got tired and tucked itself away for a nap. Then Wriggle had one *less*. "Four... take one away... three." One more grew the number up. One less shrank it down. Wriggle could go either way, one little step at a time.



Wriggle's friends played the *what-comes-next* game. "You have five. What's one more?" "Six!" "You have six. What's one more?" "Seven!" Each answer was just the number, plus one. Once you knew the trick, you always knew what came next.

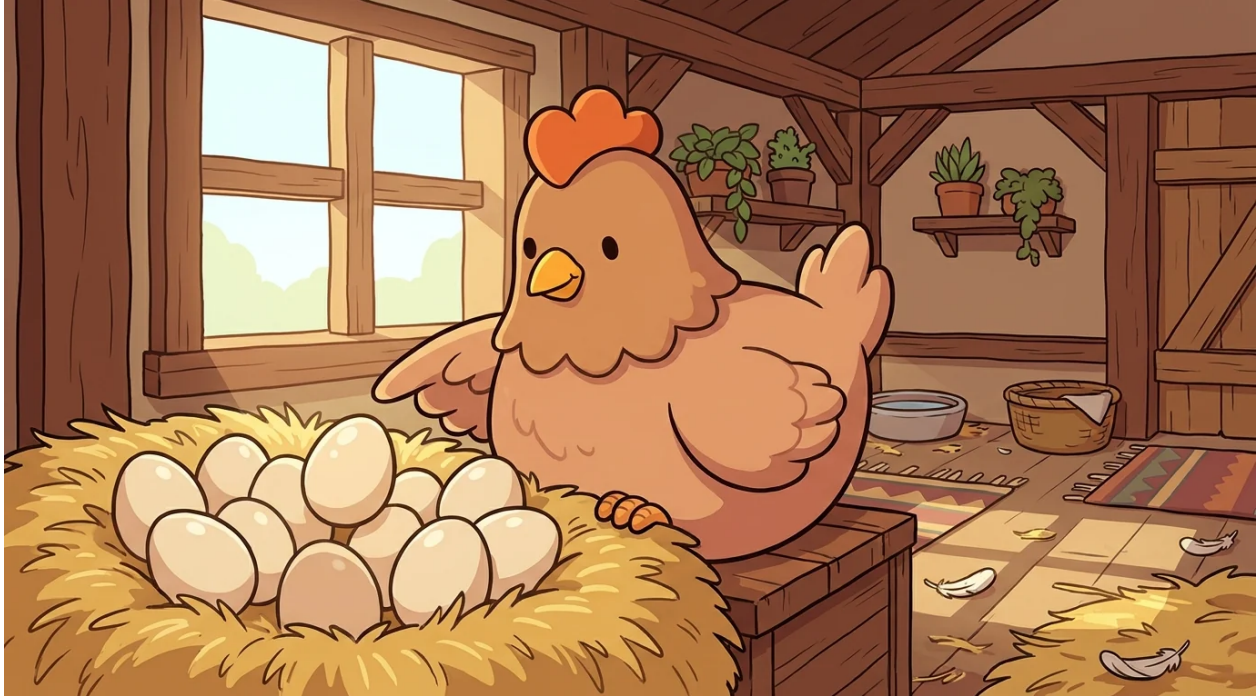


By nightfall Wriggle had munched all day and grown longer than ever. Wriggle counted every segment, slow and happy, right up to the newest one at the tip. Just this morning there had been fewer — and now, one more at a time, there were so many.

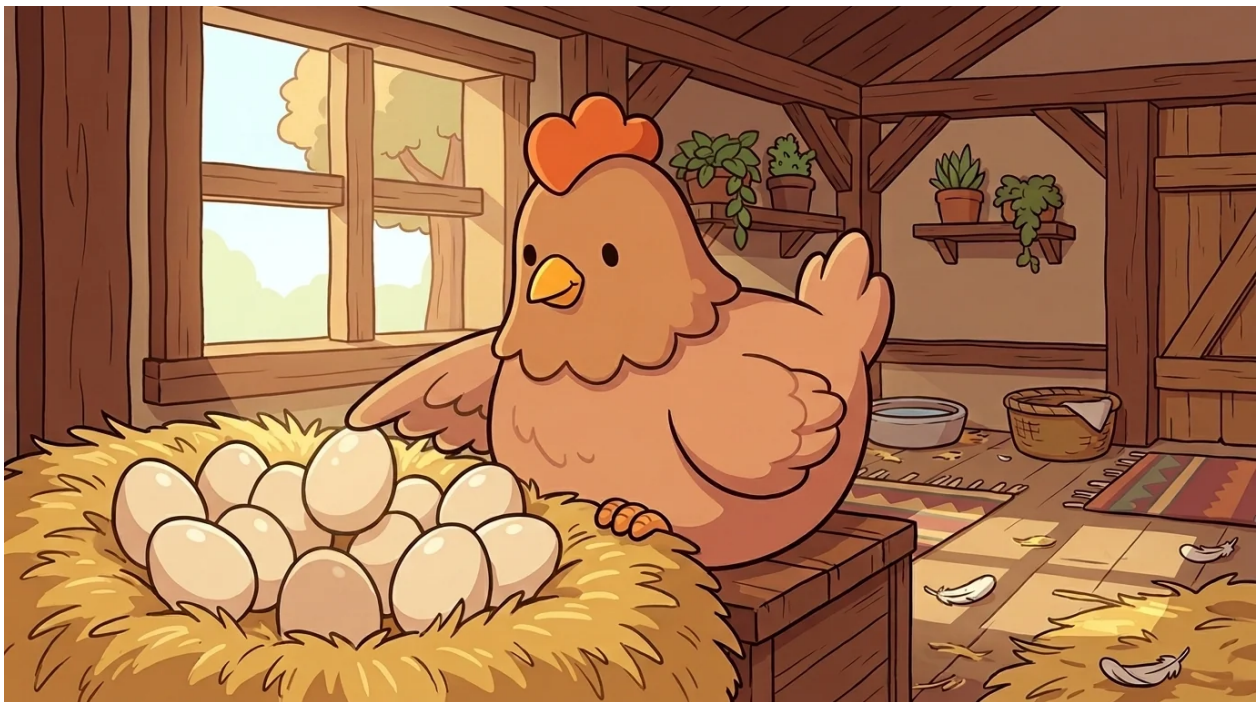
Wriggle curled up, warm and long and proud. Tomorrow there would be one more still. And Wriggle already knew exactly what number that would be.

Clutch

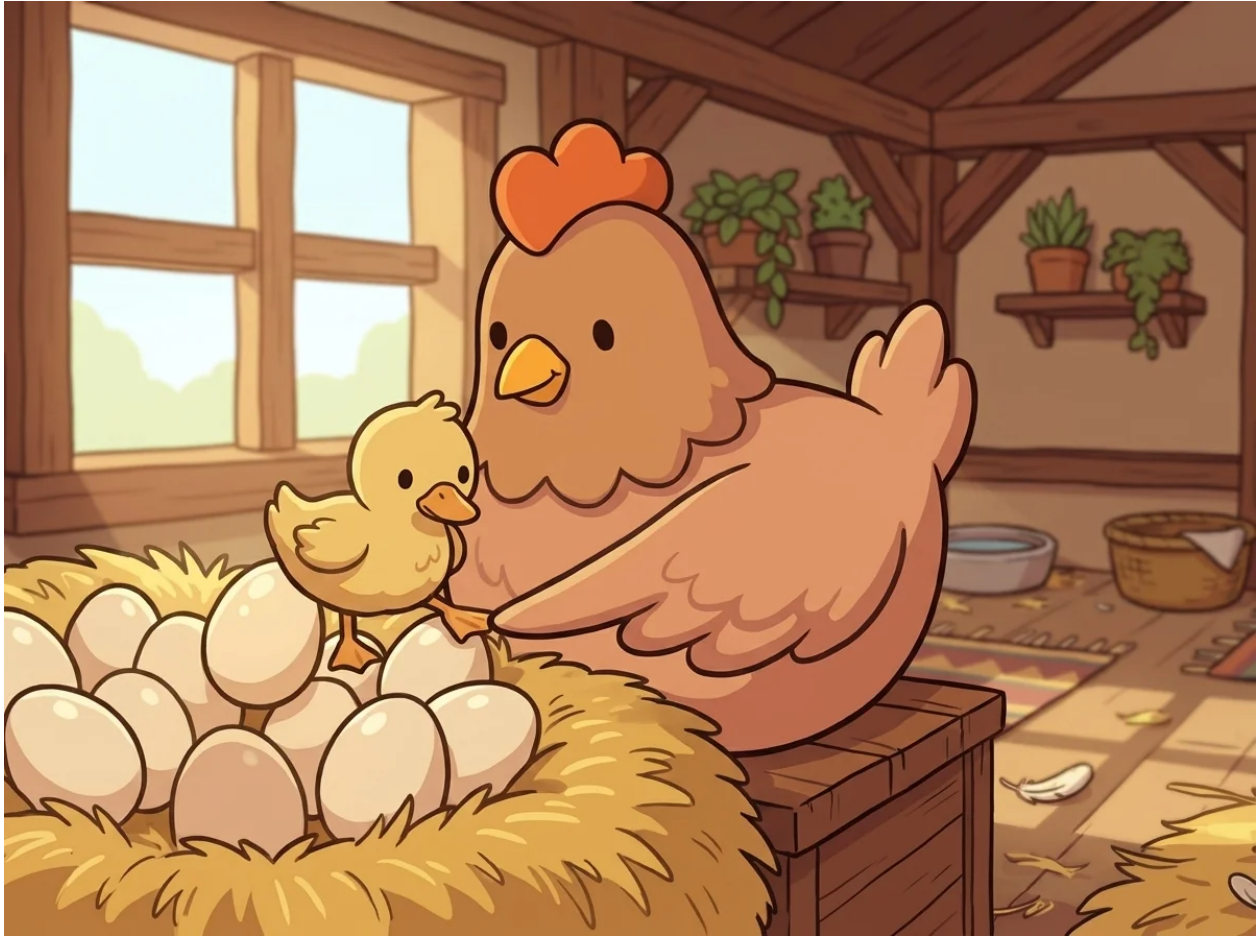
cardinality — touch each once, and the last count tells how many in all



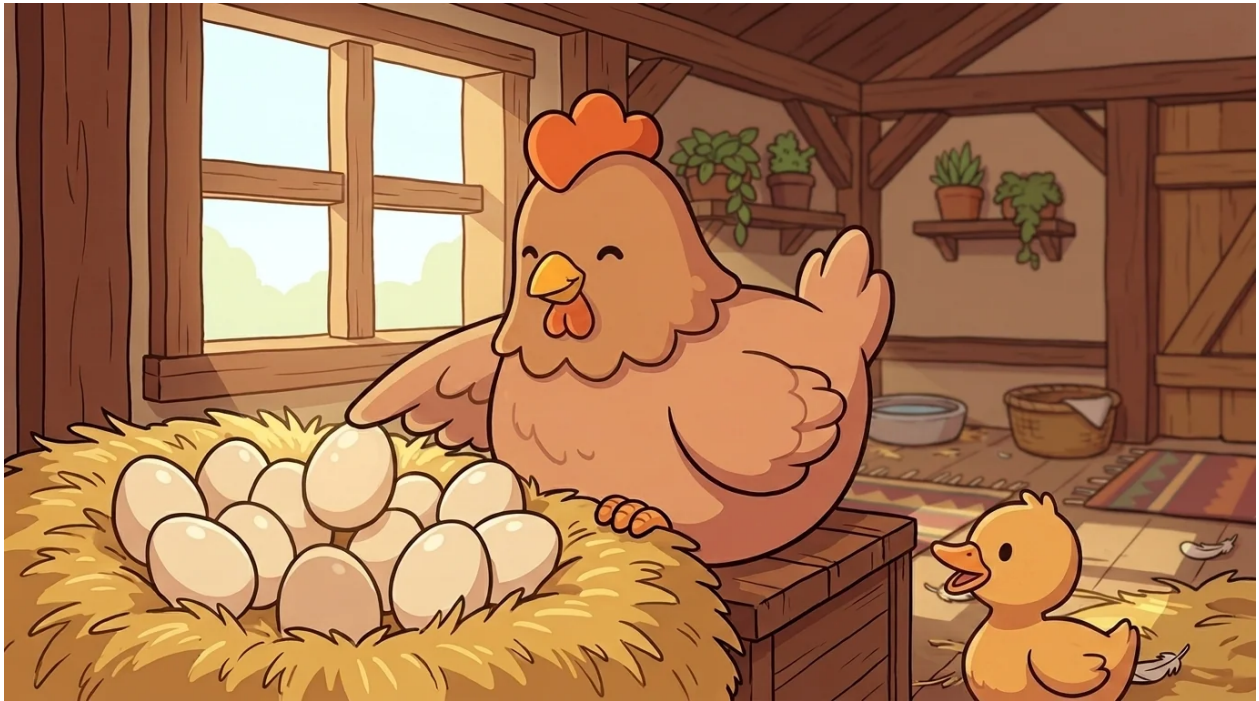
Clutch was a soft brown hen with a nest full of eggs. Every morning she liked to count them. But Clutch had learned the careful way: touch each egg *one time*, say one number for each touch, and never skip and never double.



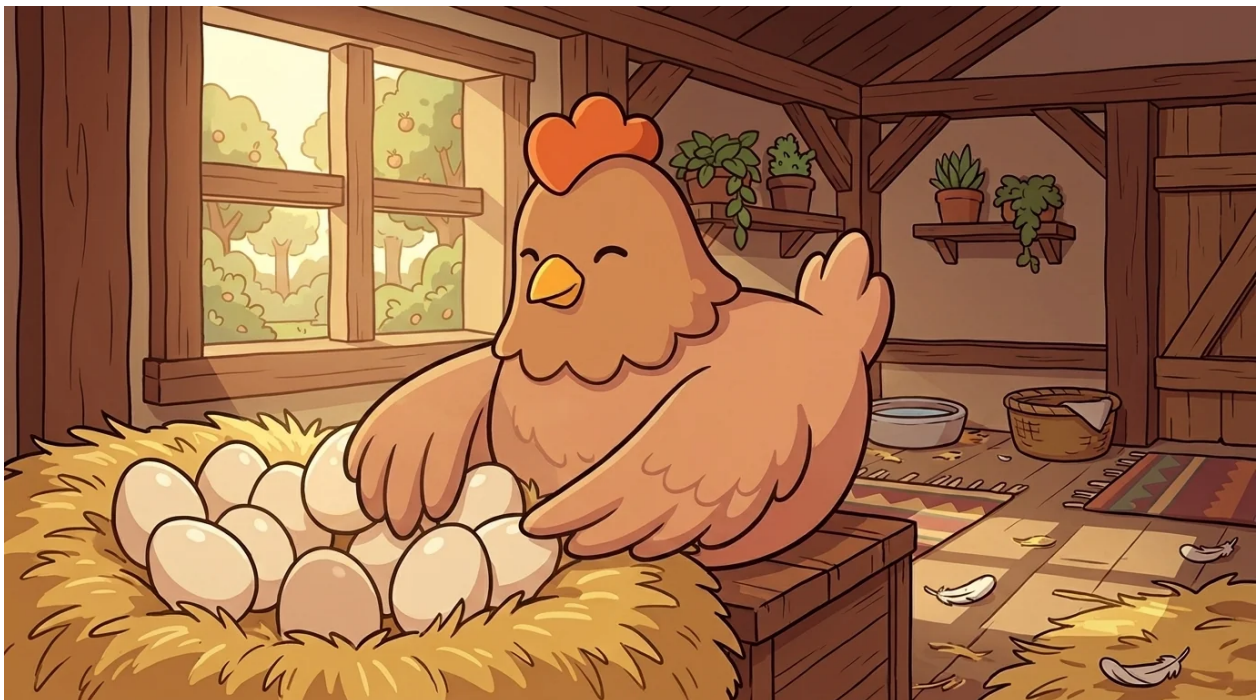
"One," Clutch said, touching the first egg. "Two," the next. "Three." One touch, one number. Her wing moved slow so she wouldn't miss any or count one twice. Each egg got exactly one number, and each number got exactly one egg.



A duckling watched and counted too fast — "One-two-threefour!" — pointing at nothing. "Slow down," Clutch said kindly. "One touch, one number." They tried together, gently tapping each egg. This time every egg got its own turn.



When Clutch touched the last egg, she said "five." Then she paused. "So how many eggs in all?" the duckling asked. Clutch smiled. "Five. The last number I said — that's how many there are." She didn't have to count again. The last count *was* the total.



That evening Clutch tucked her wing over all her eggs. She had counted them one by one, careful and true, and landed on five. Five eggs, warm beneath her.

She didn't need to count them one more time to feel sure. She already knew how many she had — and how much she loved every single one.

About Spark & Anvil

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- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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