

## Section 7.5

# Understanding 'first' and 'last'

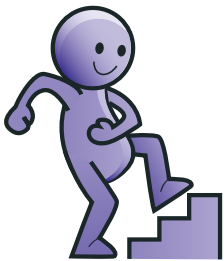


### Why is this important?

'First' and 'last' are concepts of time: they refer to something happening before or after something else. They are also significant 'order' concepts when creating sequence in numeracy.

### What to do

- It is useful to do this activity with a group of children of mixed ability, so that children who have already acquired these concepts can act as models for those who are still learning.
- Get the group to line up, then ask the child to stand 'first' or 'last' in the line.
- If the child is unsure, show him/her where to stand.
- Once you have given the instruction and the child has moved to the right place in the line, reinforce this by saying where the child is (e.g. 'Yes, now you are first').



### Step up

- Reduce the number of cues.
- Use toys, puppets and pictures (e.g. animals going into a field, people lining up at the checkout or a bus stop).
- With any of these activities, you can encourage the child to use the words 'first' and 'last' by asking 'Where's Jody in the queue?' or 'Where's the horse?' as the animals enter the field, etc.
- Link to time (e.g. 'What happened first in the story?' 'What happened last?').

### Step down

- Use visual cues (e.g. signing or pointing to where you want the child to stand as you give the instruction, or have a picture of the line you want).
- Use a small number of children so that the child can focus on understanding 'first'/'last' without having to spend a lot of time working out which child he/she is supposed to be standing by.
- Work on one concept only to begin with (e.g. 'first'). When this is established, introduce 'last'.
- Link the idea of 'last' to 'not first'. This is how children initially learn opposites.

