Crash! Boom! A Math Tale
The 2019 CLEL Bell Award Book for PLAY

by Robie H. Harris, illustrated by Chris Chatterton
Candlewick Press, 2018

A little elephant uses blocks to make a tower as tall as he is. When his first attempt goes Crash! Boom! he starts to experiment with different strategies to achieve success. This book models a variety of ways that adults and children can play with blocks, building language skills as they create plans, make choices, and talk about cause and effect.

Activity Ideas for Crash! Boom!:

• Some blocks have letters of the alphabet on them. If you have blocks like this, point out the letters to your children as you play. Which letters have straight lines? Which letters have curvy lines? Do some letters have both? What other toys at home or at school have letters or words on them? Maybe an action figure or doll has a name printed on their clothing; or sporting equipment might have a brand or manufacturer. Children need to learn to recognize letters and words wherever they appear!

• When we play with blocks, we can talk about what happens first, next, and last. For example, first we stack the blocks, then we push them, then they all fall down. As children grasp the idea that events happen in a particular order, they can better understand the sequence of events in a story. Singing songs is another fun way to practice sequencing skills that can help with comprehension. Sing *Itsy Bitsy Spider* or *Bumping Up and Down in My Little Red Wagon* and talk about what happens first, next, and last!

• Playing with blocks presents opportunities to explore concepts such as sorting, patterns, and spacial awareness, all of which support literacy skills in different ways. Sorting blocks by shape, size, or color helps children practice the differentiation skills that will help with letter recognition. Make patterns with block shapes, such as square, triangle, square, triangle. Children will need to be able to recognize patterns in letters, words, and sentences when they are readers. Describing which blocks are above, below, next to, near, or far reinforces vocabulary.

The CLEL Bell Picture Book Awards are given to books that provide excellent support of early literacy development in young children. For more information and for other activity sheets, visit [http://www.clel.org](http://www.clel.org) and select the CLEL Bell Awards tab.

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