Rumi Counts the Empty Places

Knowing what is missing is useful too.



AGES 4-7 | AN ORIGINAL MIMOMANGO STORY



Rumi carried an empty egg carton to the craft table. It had ten little cups, arranged in two rows. She planned to fill them with round clay berries.



She rolled three berries and put them in the top row. Her friend Abe asked how many more she needed. Rumi started counting the berries she already had.



"Three," she said. Abe pointed to the empty cups. "Those are the places still waiting." Rumi counted slowly. Seven empty places. That was a different answer.



She made two more berries. Now the top row was full. The bottom row waited in a neat line. "Five here, five empty," she said, touching the carton.



Abe rolled a berry too. Rumi put it in the bottom row. Six berries, four empty places. They made a little card showing both numbers side by side.



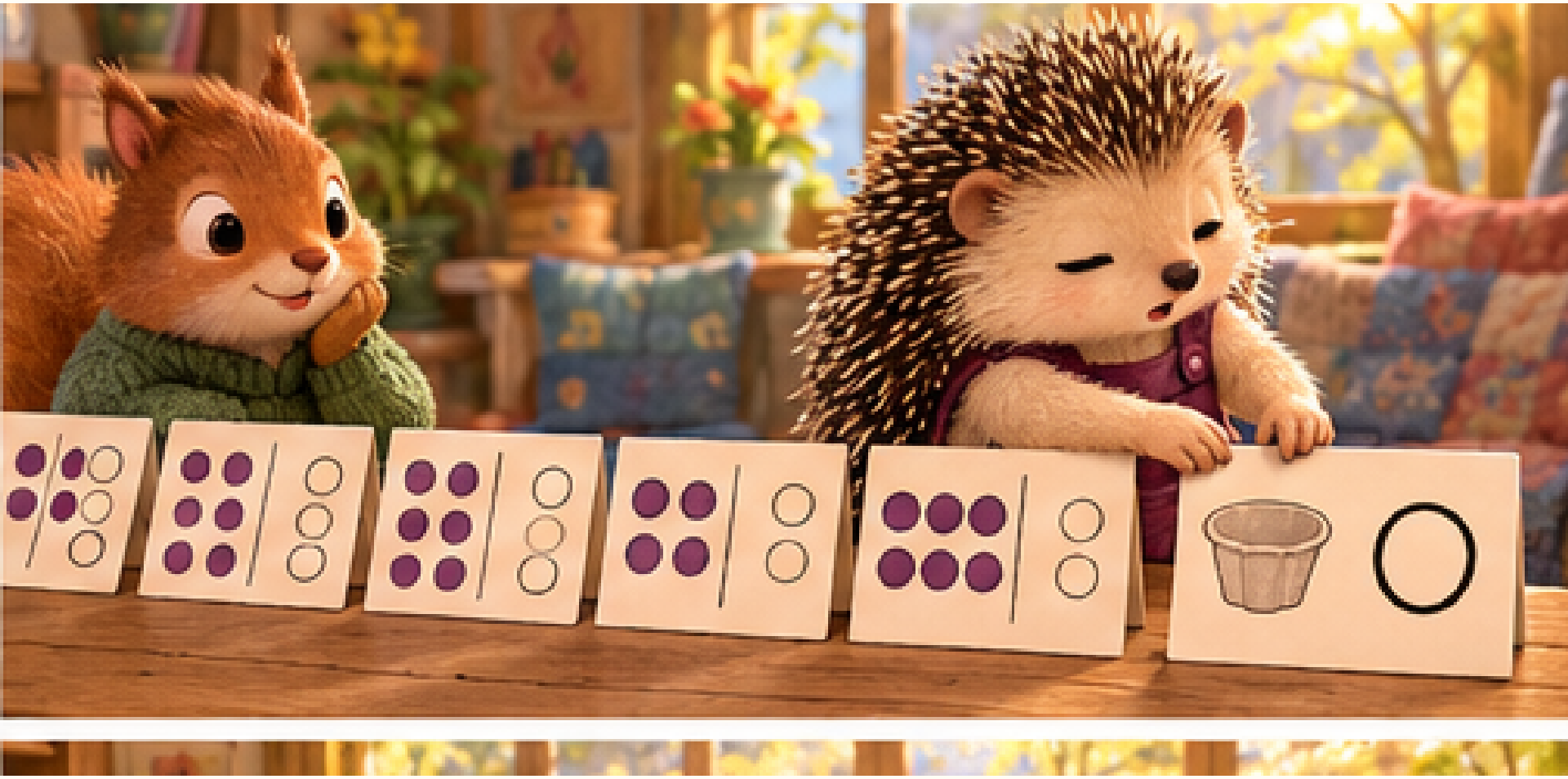
When Rumi rolled another berry, one of the first ones fell onto the table. She put the fallen berry back before counting. Moving was not the same as making more.



At eight berries, Rumi stopped for a drink. Two empty cups looked up from the carton. She knew exactly where to begin when she returned.



She rolled the last two berries. Ten cups, ten berries, no empty places. Abe made a card with a big zero beside a drawing of an empty cup.



"Zero means none left to fill," Rumi said. She placed the card at the end of their row. It looked just as important as all the other numbers.



They left the clay to dry according to its packet. Later, they would paint the berries. Rumi wrote her name on the carton so nobody would mistake them for food.



At tidy-up time, the pencil tray had three empty spaces. Rumi found three pencils on the table. Each one slid into a space with a soft wooden click.



"Finished," she said. Sometimes she counted the things she could see. Sometimes she counted the places waiting for them. Both kinds of counting helped the room feel ready.

The End

A little story. A moment to share.

Why did Rumi count the empty cups?

What did zero mean in the finished carton?

Choose a favourite moment and draw what happened next.

Original story and illustrations created with AI assistance for MimoMango, 2026.