Ninety-Nine
by Luke Dilger

Ninety-Nine is an adding and subtracting game in which players take turns adding cards from their hand to a shared stack; depending on the card played, the total count will either increase or decrease. A player is eliminated if they cannot play a card without the count exceeding 99; the object of the game is to be the last player remaining.

How to introduce this activity:
Arrange students in groups of four, providing each group with a deck of playing cards. Explain the rules:

1. To begin, the dealer hands out three cards to each player. Place the rest of the deck face-down in the middle (the draw pile). Turn the top card face-up, next to the stack (the discard pile); the value of this card determines the starting count (see below; however, if the first card has a negative value, begin with a count of 0.)

2. On their turn, beginning with the dealer, each student adds one card to the discard pile, calling out the new total.
   a. Zero through eight **add** their face value to the count.
   a. Nines have **no effect** (value of 0).
   b. Tens **subtract** 10 from the count.
   c. Face cards **add** 10 to the count.

3. To end their turn, each player takes a new card from the draw pile to replace the one played, keeping a total of three cards in their hand. (If you forget to take a card before the next player discards, you must play the rest of the game one card short!)

4. Proceed clockwise until a player cannot discard without causing the total count to exceed 99; if you cannot play a card on your turn, you lose.

5. The last player remaining wins the game.

Make sure that everyone understands how to play. If necessary, play a sample game with one group while the rest of the class looks on, then form new groups around each of the experienced students. Walk around during play, and join in a game at each table if you can.

How to assess learning:
Watch the pace of gameplay. If students can play a game in just a few minutes, they have mastered single-digit addition and subtraction of 10!