

Finding Shapes in the House

Targeted skill

Young children are expected to recognize shapes in real-life objects and describe, identify, and compare circles, triangles, and rectangles, including squares.



What to do

While this activity involves “just looking” around the house, it is looking with a purpose. First, be sure that your child knows the attributes of the shape that he or she is looking for. For example, you might draw a shape on a piece of paper (or have your child draw or copy your example). Then describe the lines that make up that shape. You might say, “This is a triangle. See how three lines make a shape with three sides. We can turn this shape any direction and it still makes a triangle.”

Then, challenge your child to find triangular shapes in your house. The shape might be found in a lamp’s design, a pattern in the couch’s fabric, or a picture on the wall.

Begin with the shapes that are most common in your home, probably rectangles (doors, windows, light switches, picture frames), then circles (doorknobs, plates, flowerpots), then triangles.

Extending the activity

- ❖ Once your child understands these basic shapes, introduce him or her to other shapes, such as the pentagon or octagon.

Geometry

Finding Shapes in the House (continued)

- ❖ Make a shape book with your child. Staple together several pages and label each page with the name of a shape. Walk around your house with your child, and as he or she points out a shape, encourage him or her to draw that shape on the appropriate page.
- ❖ Count how many examples of a single shape you can find in your house. For example, begin in the kitchen and count how many rectangles you find there. Then move to the bedroom and count the rectangles there. Compare these two numbers using such words as *most* and *fewest*, *greater* and *lesser*.
- ❖ Many of your child's toys incorporate these shapes. Be sure to point out to your child the connection between these shapes. For example, point out that the rectangles in the windows of her dollhouse and the rectangle formed by the top of the coffee table each have two long sides and two short sides.
- ❖ This activity can be done anywhere—in the garage, at the park, in the backyard. Make finding shapes an activity to use when waiting in the doctor's office or for the bus.
- ❖ Play with shapes! Form shapes with your body, for example, hold your arms together in a circle or bend your knees to form a diamond.
- ❖ Trace familiar shapes using common household items such as jar lids, cookie cutters, medium-sized puzzle pieces, or blocks. Be sure to talk about the characteristics of the shape as your child is tracing.

More questions to ask

Discuss with your child the differences between shapes. Ask how many more (or fewer) sides does a particular shape have than another. Ask what makes one shape different from another.

What your child is practicing

Understanding that shapes are used all around us is a complicated concept for young children. This activity helps your child learn to look closely at objects and make critical evaluations of them. That is, you are teaching your child to look and evaluate before making a decision. Our grandmothers called that "looking before you leap."