



Help Your Child See Shapes And Patterns!

Your child was born to look for patterns and shapes in the world! Help your child to discover shapes and ways of grouping things, and he or she will have a head start with mathematical thinking. There are lots of ways that infants, toddlers and preschoolers can build their math skills. You as a parent can help. Try these suggestions:

YOUR INFANT:

- Read together, with baby in your lap. Use sturdy books with simple, colorful pictures and with pages that are easy to handle. Read the words and point to the pictures. Use simple, short sentences.
- Play with toys that squeak, rattle, light up, or play music when handled. These help teach infants "cause and effect." With a rattle, for example, let your baby touch it and see how you shake it to make sounds. Blocks, balls of different safe sizes, pull toys, and toys with safe parts for baby to fit together also help a child learn.

YOUR TODDLER:

- Let your toddler play with safe objects of different shapes, colors and sizes. Help him or her to place plastic mixing bowls inside one another or stack cans, boxes or blocks. Simple puzzles with big pieces are also fun to put together.
- Talk with your toddler about the colors, textures, and shapes you see around you: an orange square of cheese, a white oval egg, a pear-shaped light bulb.
- Choose stories to read that help your child to count or sort. Toddlers also like books with textures to feel and flaps to open.

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- Talk about the colors and shapes of objects as you and your toddler pick up the objects to put them away. "I will pick up all of the green ones; you pick up the red ones." "I will get the round ones, you get the square ones."
- Give your toddler a chore such as sorting socks or silverware. Talk with your child about how he or she is sorting: by color, by shape, by size, etc.
- Hide several familiar objects in a bag or box. Have your child try to tell what they are by feeling with her hands. No looking!
- Use a set of foam rubber numbers, letters, or shapes to play with in the bathtub. Play a game where your child gets to play with each one after he names it or identifies its color or shape – with your help.