

# All About Shapes

## What Is Shape Knowledge?

Shape knowledge involves understanding:

- The size and shape of objects.
- What objects look like from different angles.
- How an object looks if you change it in some way, such as turning it around or cutting it in half.

## Why Is Learning About Shapes Important?

Shape knowledge helps us every day as we:

- Pack a bag or lunch box to fit everything we need.
- Cut a pie into equal pieces for the whole family.
- Imagine how to arrange furniture in a room.



There are different types of triangles, but they all have 3 sides and 3 angles.

## What Do Children Need to Know About Shapes?

Children need to know:

- **Shape names**, like *circle*, *triangle*, and *square*, and what defines a shape.
- **How to recognize different examples of a shape**, as well as what shapes are not part of a category.
- **Words for parts of shapes**, like *corner*, *side*, *angle*, and *edge*.
- **Words that describe shapes**, like *tall*, *curved*, and *narrow*.
- **What common shapes look like** if rotated, cut in half, or put together with other shapes.



You can split a square into triangles.

## How Can We Help Children Learn About Shapes?

Our world is made up of shapes, and using spatial language in whatever language or languages spoken at home helps children build their spatial skills. Families can describe shapes they see—in buildings, pictures, or objects around the home. Use shape names and describe the parts and qualities of shapes.

### Babies and Toddlers

- **Talk about shapes.** Point out shapes in storybook pictures like, “This snowman is made of *circles*. His carrot nose looks like a *triangle*.”
- **Describe shapes in your toddler’s world.** During snack and mealtimes, discuss shapes of different food items and how they look if you change them:

- “Your Cheerios are a *circle*—they are *round*. The Cheerios have an even *smaller circle inside*! What does it look like if you bite it in half?”
- “This graham cracker is not *round*, it’s a *big rectangle*. And if we break it in half, now we have two *special rectangles that are called squares*.”

### Preschoolers and Older Children

- **Play guessing games using shape language.** “I’m thinking of a shape that has *four equal sides*.” Take turns guessing and providing clues!
- **Work on puzzles together.** Allow children to try putting pieces together. Talk about why something fits or doesn’t fit. “How did you know that piece would fit there?” or “Can you find a piece that has two *flat, straight edges*?” or “What happens if we *turn* this piece?”
- **Mix blocks together that are different sizes (*smaller and larger*) and shapes (*cylinders and triangles*).** Try stacking blocks in different ways. If it doesn’t work the first time, encourage children to turn or rotate the blocks. Try to create new shapes by putting several blocks together—what shapes do you end up with?