

Shapes Hunt: Spotting Circles, Squares and Triangles Around the Home

This video and printable shape-spotting trail turn an ordinary walk around the home or garden into a game of finding circles, squares and triangles in everyday things like plates, windows, clocks and doors. It supports the shape-recognition part of Reception maths through play, with no sitting down or drilling required.

What it is

This is a short video paired with a simple printable shape-spotting trail for children in Reception, the first year of primary school in England. Together they turn a game of 'spot the shape' into a few minutes of playful looking, using things already in the home, like a round plate, a square window pane or a triangular roof shape. It supports a goal within the Mathematics area of learning in the EYFS (the Early Years Foundation Stage, the official framework that guides what children learn from birth to age five). Recognising and naming simple 2D shapes, flat shapes like circles, squares and triangles, is one of the ideas children meet during this stage, usually through everyday play rather than formal lessons.

What happens

The video shows a child wandering around a home and garden, pointing out shapes as they spot them: a round clock face, a square tile, a triangular garden flag. The printable trail works like a simple treasure hunt, children can carry it around and tick off or draw a line to each shape as they find a real-life example, turning the activity into a game rather than a seated task. There's no reading or writing needed to join in, and no right pace to go at. Some children might spot three shapes in two minutes; others might wander and chat about colours and sizes along the way, and that's absolutely fine, the point is noticing and talking, not finishing.

What it means for your child

Spotting and naming shapes in the real world is part of how young children build early mathematical thinking, well before they're ready for anything more formal. In England's early years, this kind of shape recognition sits within the Early Learning Goals, the things most children are expected to be able to do by the end of Reception, as set out in the EYFS framework. It's one small piece of a much bigger picture that also includes counting, patterns and problem-solving, all usually built through play, stories and everyday routines rather than tests. Exactly how and when shapes come up will vary a little from school to school, so if you're curious about your child's progress or how shapes are taught in their classroom, their teacher is the best person to ask.

How you can help at home

You don't need any special resources, just everyday curiosity. On a walk, in the kitchen, or during bath time, try pointing things out together: 'That plate is round, like a circle,' or 'Look, the window is a square.' Let your child lead sometimes, too, they'll often spot shapes you hadn't noticed. Keep it short and playful, a couple of minutes here and there works better than one long sitting, and there's no need to test or quiz. If your child is learning English as an additional language, naming shapes in

their home language as well as English is a lovely way to build both together. For children with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities), simply slow the pace, use real objects they can touch, and follow their interests, there's no need to rush through every shape.

Questions parents often ask

Does my child need to already know shape names before trying this? No, this is exactly how children learn them, through gentle repetition and pointing things out together, not before. What if we don't have a garden? The trail works just as well indoors, kitchens and living rooms are full of shapes. Is this the same in every school? The general goal of recognising shapes is shared across England's early years framework, but how and when it's introduced can vary by school and by each child's own pace, so ask your child's teacher if you'd like to know more about their approach. Should we be worried if our child isn't interested yet? Not at all, interest often comes and goes at this age, try again another day, or try a different everyday object.

Sources

- Department for Education, GOV.UK: 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'
- Department for Education, GOV.UK: 'Development Matters: non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage'