

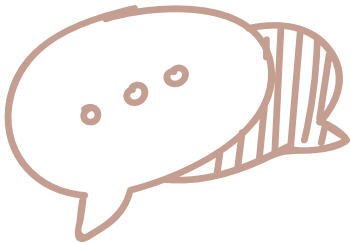
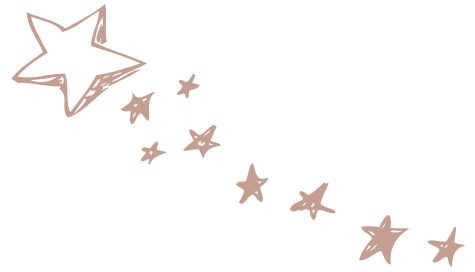
Let's Play!

Activities for Families



SET
2

Communication and Literacies



Heart Beat of Mother Earth



What

This activity engages parents and children in a musical and cultural experience. Children are interested in rhythm, dancing, or moving to music. This activity supports their interest in music through drumming. They do not care if you think you are a terrible singer or musician, they just care that you sing and play along with them.

1 Create the Environment

- Introduce a range of objects of various size and materials that will make a collection of sounds when they are banged on or hit. Together, look for unique objects around your home for drumming. During the hunt, talk about which objects might be good for drumming and why.
- Be curious about objects you collect. Together, wonder aloud about the sounds they will make and what objects might sound like when used at the same time.

2 Drumming

- Encourage your child to drum with objects found around your home such as pots and pans, bowls or containers, and wooden or metal spoons. Let your child explore the objects freely, and remember to have fun!
- Talk about the beat of your heart with your child. Notice how your heart beats slow or fast when you are doing different activities. Some Indigenous people refer to the drum as the heartbeat of Mother Earth.
- Listen to music with different drumbeats. Try different drumbeat speeds and sounds —slow, fast, hard, and soft.

3 Singing

- Try this fun song that one Métis mother/educator uses with children. Pick any animal you like and have fun with the sounds they make.

Song:

Mother Earth Has a Forest – to the tune of “Old MacDonald Had a Farm.”

Mother Earth Has a forest – Hey yah hey yah hey!

And in that forest, she has a Bear – Hey yah hey yah hey!

With a Grrr...grrr...here, and a grrr...grrr...there.

Here a grr...there a grrr...everywhere a grrr...grrr...

Mother Earth Has a Forest – Hey yah hey yah hey!

Repeat with other forest animals and sounds such as: Wolf (Awhoohoo), Snake (Ssssssss), Frog (Ribbet), Robin (Tweet).



Why

Through this experience, children will

- Develop communication and literacy skills
- Develop motor skills, strength and control and hand-eye coordination
- Express emotions, self-regulate, focus, and attend to one activity
- Communicate thoughts and experiences creatively using many different forms of expression
- Develop diverse language abilities, rhythm, and the capacity to communicate with others in many ways
- Engage in sound and word play
- Experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures

How

Find a variety of materials inside and outside for your child to drum, bang, and make music. Drum along with your child. Copy your child and encourage your child to copy you. Explore different spaces for drumming. How do your instruments sound inside and outside? How do they sound in the bathroom as compared to a larger space?

Choose a song to sing or nursery rhyme to sing together while you drum, or take turns drumming and singing.

This is a fun activity and it can happen as soon as your child is sitting up or grasping things and moving them intentionally. All children love to bang objects!

Read a book with your child about drumming or other ideas that connect with this theme.

Here are suggestions:

- *Drum City*, by Thea Gudione
- *The Drum Calls Softly*, by Dave Bouchard

Where

This activity can occur both indoors and outdoors at any time during the day.

When

Drumming can be introduced to children at a very early age. They may sit on their own or on your lap and hold an object to bang it. Drumming or singing can also be a calming activity and may be a way to help your child change focus after an exciting activity or a disappointment.

Reference

L. Androssoff, Métis Parent, Advocate and Early Childhood Specialist (song).



I am Thankful



What

This experience provides an opportunity for children to share their gratitude with others.

1 Create the Environment

Before your child goes to sleep, tell them about someone or something you love, or something wonderful that happened to you that day.

2 Sharing Experiences

Ask your child to think about someone or something they love, or something wonderful that happened to them that day. Maybe they are thankful for having fun, spending time with a relative, sharing a family meal, or making a new friend.

Guide your child to take three soft, slow breaths, and feel thankful. This encourages your child to be mindful and reflect on their experiences.

Why

Through this experience, children will learn to

- Reflect on themselves and how they feel
- Communicate thoughts and experiences creatively using different forms of expression
- Be curious about vocabulary, concepts, and written language
- Express their points of view and reflect on others' views

How

Try the activity as described. You can remind your child about the day's activities or share what you noticed.

Help your child write down what they are thankful for. Ask your child to draw a picture that represents the words you have written together.

Wake up in the morning and try revisiting what you were thankful for with your child. Use this activity as a reminder of the good things in your life.

Read a story with your child about gratitude or other ideas that connect with the activity. Here is a suggestion:

- *Orca Chief* by Roy Henry Vickers & Robert Budd



Where

This activity can occur anywhere.

When

Try this activity before your child goes to sleep.

Reference

Braun, M., & Stewart, W. (2017). *Mindful Kids: 50 Mindfulness Activities for Kindness, Focus and Calm*. [Activity Deck]. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books



Mirror Fun



What

Mirrors are an entertaining, engaging way to help your child explore faces, expressions, self-awareness, and the movements and expressions of others. Children of all ages love to explore their reflections and how they can change.

1 Create the Environment

- Use any mirror you have access to. Hold your baby in front of a hallway mirror, or lay your child on their tummy, down on the floor in front of a full-length mirror or use a hand-held mirror while cuddling your child on your lap. If you are using a large mirror, ensure that it is stable or securely mounted.

2 Mirror Fun!

- Sit in front of a mirror with your child. Together with your child, talk about what you see. Pay attention to labeling emotions and facial expressions.
- This activity is all about conversation and naming feelings in a positive, relaxed way. Be flexible and have fun! Let your child take the lead.

Why

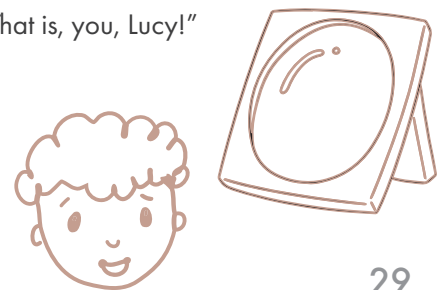
Exploring emotions and facial expressions in this way supports

- Recognizing emotions in themselves and others
- Building a rich emotional vocabulary, which aids in communication and self-awareness
- Identifying and anticipating what influences emotions in themselves and others

How

Place your child in front of the mirror and draw their attention to their reflection. You can do this by tapping the glass or moving the mirror (if it is a hand-held mirror). Look in the mirror together and talk about what you see, using their name. Some examples

- “Look at the baby in the mirror! That’s you, Enrique!”
- While pointing at various body parts, “There are your (blue/brown) eyes. I see your nose. I love your pink cheeks. There is your mouth smiling at me. What a happy baby!”
- “You look so serious. Are you wondering who that is in the mirror? That is, you, Lucy!”
- Wave baby’s hand, “I am waving your hand. Hello!”



Pay attention to where your child is looking. If something has caught their attention, talk about it. If your child is learning to talk, guess what they are looking at and repeat the single word. If your child babbles, give them time to talk and then respond so that you are having a give-and-take conversation (even if you can't understand what they are saying).

Try modeling different facial expressions and ask your child to play along by copying you. Talk about what you are doing and label different faces for different emotions. Encourage children to copy you or come up with their own silly faces! You can turn this into a guessing game, with each of you taking a turn. Try introducing more complicated feeling words as your child matures. Some examples

- "Look at my big smile! How am I feeling right now?"
- What do you look like when you are grumpy or unhappy? Can you make a grumpy face? Look at how my eyebrows go down when I am feeling unhappy. Can you do that?"
- "Do you remember this morning, when I came into your room, and you had climbed out of your crib all by yourself? I was so surprised! I looked like this. Was there a time that you felt surprised?"

Make sure to give your child lots of time to answer questions. Young children often need several seconds (or more) to listen to a question and then form a response. As always, let your child take the lead.

Try telling a short story and have your child act out feelings in front of the mirror. You can also copy emotions if that is more fun. Give your child plenty of time to decide what emotion the character feels and to make the same facial expression. Provide supportive dialogue or hints if they are struggling. Encourage your child to be goofy or dramatic with you! An example

- "Once upon a time, there was a girl named Little Red Riding Hood. One day, her father asked her to bring a basket of treats to her grandmother. Little Red Riding Hood was in the middle of a game and really didn't want to go. Can you show me how Little Red Riding Hood felt? How did she feel? She did NOT want to leave her game. What face do you make when I ask you to do a chore when you are playing?"

Try using props (i.e. sunglasses, scarves, hats, necklaces) to change your appearances. Take turns helping each other put on and take off different items.

Read a book with your child about playing with mirrors or other ideas that connect with this theme. Here are suggestions:

- *Do Your Ears Hang Low?* by Jenny Cooper
- *I See Myself*, by Vicki Cobb

Where

This activity can occur anywhere there is a mirror to use.

When

This game can take place any time of day, but is most successful when your child is alert, focused, and in the mood to play and interact.

Reference

Herr, J., & Swim, T. (2003). *Rattle Time, Face to Face, and Many Other Activities for Infants: Birth to 6 Months*. Clifton Park, NY: Thomson/Delmar Learning.



Musical Drawing



What

This experience explores the senses of sight and sound together and can be very fun for your child if they show interest in music and rhythm.

1 Create the Environment

- Choose any type of music that your child and you listen to, or perhaps important in your community, such as different types of drumming, dance, or other types of instrumental music.
- Tape a large piece of easel paper to the floor, or use regular size paper. Bring out some crayons, markers, chalk, or finger paint.

2 Musical Drawing

Play the music and encourage your child to draw or paint on the paper, using the drawing tools, according to what they hear in the music.

Why

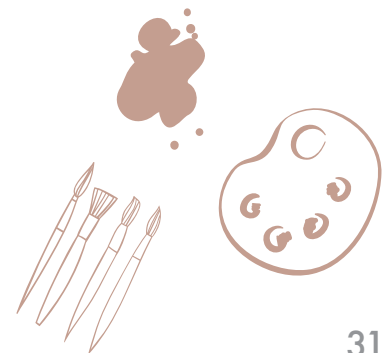
Through this experience, children will learn

- Explore the world using their bodies and senses
- Build, create, and design using different materials and techniques
- Actively explore, think, and reason
- Be creative and expressive in a variety of ways
- Express a zest for living and learning

How

Encourage your child to draw or paint based on the music that is being played. If you are using paint, try to add other elements such as soap or sparkles, so they can see the different textures of the paint they are using.

You can ask how the music made them feel. Did the music make them happy? Did the music make them sad? Did the music make them calm? Are those feelings anywhere in the picture?



When the music is complete, and your child has finished drawing, ask your child questions about their drawing:

- What did you make?
- What colours did you use?
- What types of drawing tools did you use?
- What was your favourite part of the music? Where is that in the drawing?

Observe your child's drawing and get curious. For example, you might notice that there is one area that is sparse, or one area that has a lot of drawing on it. Ask your child why they drew it like that.

Read a story with your child about music, drawing or other ideas that connect with the activity.

Here is a suggestion:

- *Sam & Eva* by Debbie Ridpath Ohi

Consider visiting an art gallery or a nearby museum for inspiration:

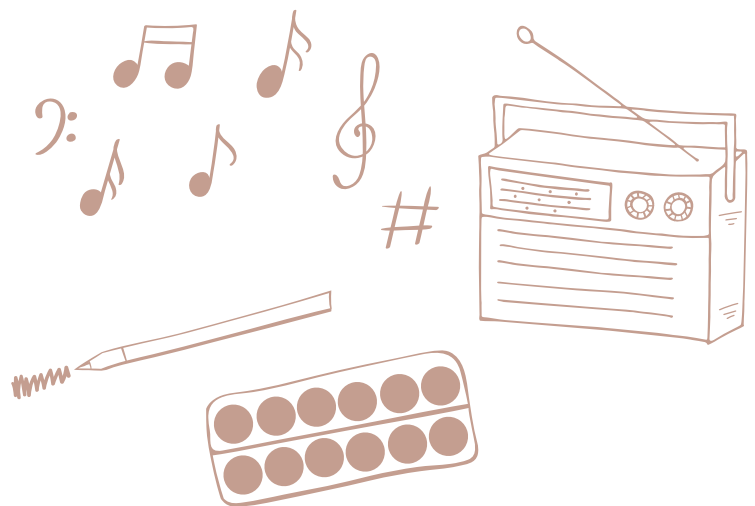
<https://www.hellobc.com/things-to-do/museums-heritage-sites>

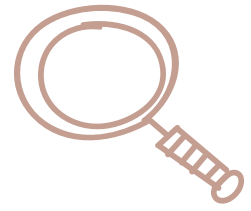
Where

This activity may get messy if using paint. Try this experience either inside or outside.

When

This activity can occur during any time of the day.





Picture Book Scavenger Hunt

What

This is an interactive way of exploring reading and literacy while incorporating physical activity. Use picture books as the basis for a scavenger hunt.

1 Create the Environment

- Pick a favorite picture book (preferably one with human characters and familiar locations). After you read it through once or twice, ask your child if they would like to try and find things they see in the book!

2 Play Scavenger Hunt!

- With your child, identify the things that you see in the book and that you will hunt for (e.g., dog, table, car, tree). Then take your book outside or to a new room and try to find things from the real world that match what is in the book.

Why

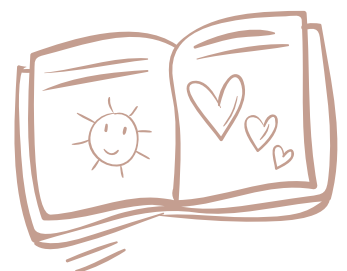
Through this experience, children will

- Make connections between reading materials and the real world
- Develop receptive (heard/read) and expressive (spoken/signed) language
- Identify printed language in different settings
- Make connections between ideas and objects
- Develop an awareness of printed language
- Enhance communication and literacy skills

How

You might start inside your house with toys or items that are familiar to your child. Try choosing a board book with one object on each page, then go find the object together. Hold the object close to the picture and label it twice. For example, if you're reading a book about children's toys, and you see a teddy bear, go together to find one and say "bear" while pointing at the picture, and then "bear" while pointing at the object.

Try moving beyond looking for simple objects by looking for **types** or **categories** of things. For example, if you see an apple in the book, ask your child to find another fruit, or another healthy food at home or the grocery store. You could also look for colours or shapes based on the images you see. If you see squares in the book, ask your child if they can find a square near you. Try looking for numbers or letters as well.



You could try collecting objects found in books ahead of time and put them inside a bag. Have your child close their eyes, reach in and pull one out. Then try to find the object inside the book!

For children who are beginning to read, you could ask them to look for objects in the book out in the real world. You might try looking for **concepts** or **qualities**. If something in the book is up high, try to find something else that is up high. If a character is wet, try to find something else that is wet. To make this more challenging, you could try finding opposites.

If the activity is too challenging, or your child gets distracted, try again with a different book. Try gathering objects ahead of time and hide the objects in your home. Make it a race to find them!

You may find that this activity is rewarding enough in itself, or you may choose to use a reward for a certain number of found items.

Read a book with your child about searching for or matching things, or other ideas that connect with this theme. Here are suggestions:

- *Cycle City*, by Alison Farrell
- *Where's the Pair?* by Britta Teckuntrup

Check out BC public libraries for books and much more!

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/arts-culture/public-libraries>

Where

This activity can occur anywhere you are. You can do this activity at home, out and about while you go about your day, or during a walk and exploring. By taking the activity outside and searching for items, not only will you be supporting your child's literacy, you will be promoting physical activity at the same time.

When

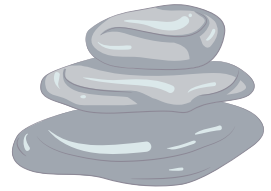
This activity can occur any time. It is best for a single child, or a small group of children, though it could also take place within a larger group.

Reference

Lawhon, T., Cobb, J.B. (2002). Routines that Build Emergent Literacy Skills in Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers *Childhood Education Journal*, 30(2), 113-118.



Story Stones



What

This activity originates from a tradition of Aboriginal peoples of Australia. Story Stones are painted stones kept in a small pouch and used as a tool to tell stories.

Simplicity is key for this activity. Paint or draw various simple images that support the child's different interests on small rocks. Once dried, place them in a pouch.

Invite the child to explore the stones and create their own stories using the rocks.

Why

Through this experience, children will learn to

- Communicate thoughts and creatively use many different forms of expression
- Experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures
- Express their points of view
- Understand abstract and critical thinking, creativity, and invention
- Be independent and confident as they take initiative to create storylines
- Enhance their communication and literacy skills

How

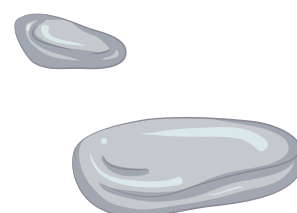
Paint simple images on the stones: house, dog, cat, tree, car, mountains, waves, and individual people (possibly even small caricatures of family members). For some children, this will act as more of an explorative or sight-word activity. Encourage your child to repeat the name of the image several times with you.

Allow the child to explore the stones. Some children will automatically create a storyline whereas others may need some encouragement. You can support children's development by having them explain the symbolism of the stones and ask them who the characters are or what the images represent. Ask probing questions such as "Where do they live?" or "What are they doing?" to help them develop a storyline.

Your child can paint their own rocks. This will allow them to take full ownership over the activity and highlight and encourage their ideas and creative thinking. Also, try encouraging your child to develop a storyline.

Read a story with your child about creativity or other ideas that connect with the activity. Here is a suggestion:

- *Zen Shorts* by Jon J Muth

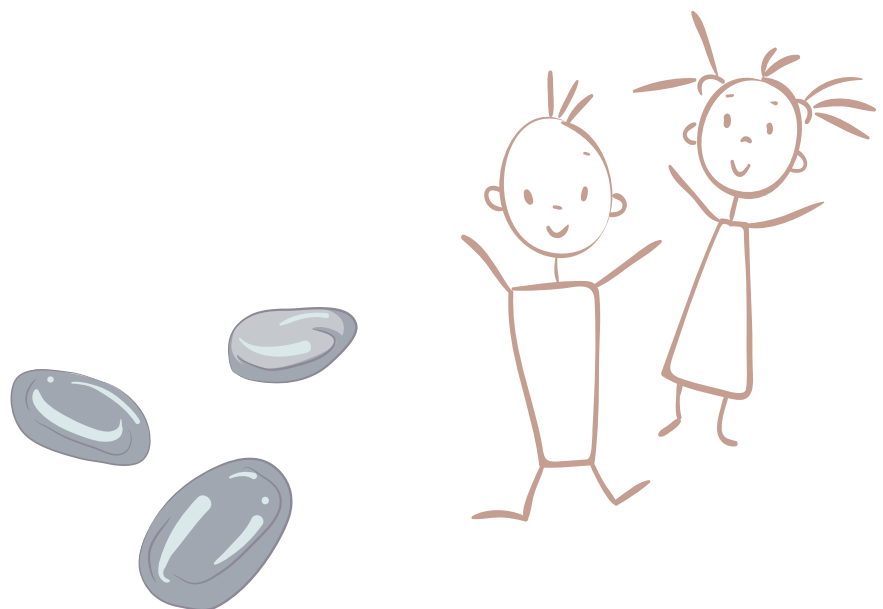


Where

This experience can be completed anywhere, preferably in an area with ample room for the child to spread out the stones to create their story.

When

This activity can occur at any time of the day, and may be explored individually or in small groups.



Talking Stick



What

This experience is modelled after the use of Talking Sticks by many Indigenous peoples. It is a powerful tool for respectful communication. Talking Sticks are used by different groups in different ways, however they are often used during large cultural gatherings, when resolving disputes, or when conducting a ceremony or celebration where more than one person speaks. The Talking Stick is passed from person to person as they speak, and only the person holding the Talking Stick may speak at that time.

The Talking Stick teaches children the fundamentals of communication in a respectful, patient, and collaborative way. It encourages children to learn skills such as turn taking, self-discipline, and problem solving in a calm and safe environment.

1 Create the Environment

A Talking Stick is often used in a sharing circle, where everyone joins together to sit in a circle. Try using a talking stick when many different opinions should be shared, or if children are having a disagreement and need a tool to help them resolve conflict. You can also try it when there are just too many people talking at one time to ensure that everyone has a chance to say something.

Customs differ between communities, but there are some important common guidelines for using a Talking Stick.

1. Everyone will have a turn to speak. If an elder is present, they will always be first to speak.
2. Whoever is holding the Talking Stick decides when they are finished speaking. They can then give it to the person next to them, or to someone who has not spoken yet, but no one is required to speak if they choose not to.
3. When someone is sharing their thoughts, everyone else is expected to listen without interrupting or making comments.

Why

Through this experience, children learn to

- Communicate, use interpersonal skills, and diplomacy
- Foster positive coping strategies and problem-solving skills
- Communicate thoughts and experiences creatively using many different forms of expression
- Develop diverse language abilities and the capacity to communicate with others in many ways
- Experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures
- Express their own points of view and reflect on others' views

How

Children may need time to understand the concept of a Talking Stick and other related elements of respectful communication.

Share a story or a book about a Talking Stick, such as *The Talking Stick* by Dot Meharry. Sharing the story and having a discussion afterwards on the importance of a Talking Stick helps establish an understanding of the fundamentals of communication.

Where

This experience can be completed anywhere, but preferably in a space that is quiet and with few distractions. If completing the activity with a group of children, use an area where the group can sit in a circle.

When

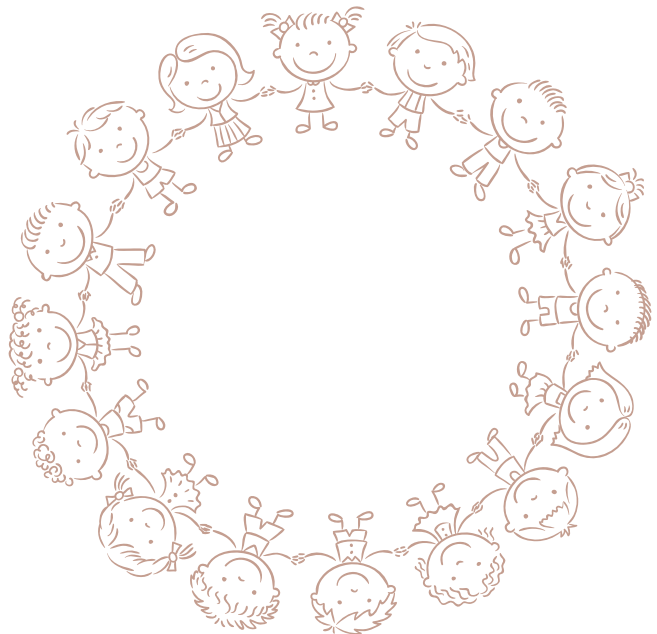
This activity can occur at any time of the day but is best explored in small groups, or with the entire family.

References

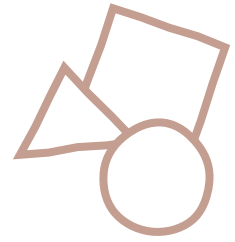
Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples Blog.

Retrieved from: <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/first-nation-talking-stick-protocol>

Meharry, D. (2006). *The Talking Stick*. New Zealand: Raupo Publishing Ltd.



Triangles, Squares and Circles



What

Shapes, patterns, and sequences can be particularly engaging for children who like predictability and routines. This activity can be played in a variety of ways to support their interests.

1 Create the Environment

- Cut out different shapes from a piece of paper such as large squares, triangles, circles, or rectangles. Your child can help you cut or draw shapes or give you ideas for what kinds of shapes they would like to play with.

2 Play with Shapes!

- Place the shapes in front of your child. Observe how your child interacts with the different shapes or creates patterns.
- If your child seems uninterested, try the activity another time when they're talking about shapes or patterns. You can also try adding stickers or faces to the shapes (e.g., a happy triangle or a sad square).

Why

Through this experience, children will learn to

- Build, create, and design using different materials and techniques
- Be curious about vocabulary, shape concepts, and spoken language
- Engage in sound and word play
- Use form, numbers, patterns and measurement in meaningful contexts

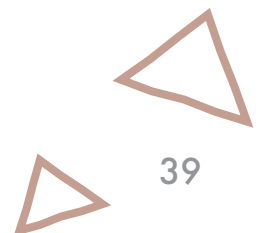
How

With your child, name the different shapes that you see. For example, point to a square, circle, or rectangle. Say the words together.

Try counting different numbers of shapes out loud together (e.g., count the number of squares, circles, or triangles).

Play a guessing game: "I have four sides and four corners. What's my name?" Try making up funny names for the shapes like "Silly Circle" or "Rascal Rectangle."

Encourage your child to make different patterns with the shapes. For example, make a square and triangle pattern together (square, triangle, square, triangle), and then ask your child what shape should come next and why. Remember that there isn't a wrong answer! Encourage your child to create their own pattern.



Encourage your child to create something with the shapes. For example, they could make an animal with the different shapes, a landscape, a person, or anything that they wish, using their imagination!

If your child likes to colour or design, encourage them to colour the different cut out shapes or create designs using different colouring materials.

If you play outside, the wind might blow away your pattern. This might be silly and fun, or it might be frustrating. You might also use natural materials for shapes instead (rocks, sticks, leaves).

Read a book with your child about shapes or other ideas that connect with this theme. Here are suggestions:

- *Circle, Square, Moose*, by Kelly L. Bingham
- *Shapes*, by DK Braille

Where

You can play anywhere, though a flat surface like the table, floor, or on the ground would work best.

When

This experience can occur at any time of the day.

