



Did you know ...



For babies and toddlers, talking about and playing with shapes is the first stage of recognizing letters.

Babies and toddlers are trying to make sense of their world. One way they do this is to look, taste, listen to, and feel objects. This helps them to sort the objects into categories, such as round objects/soft objects, and to tell one object from another, such as a blanket from a ball. Once they are toddlers, they can begin learning about shapes and colors.

Children who recognize shapes and are able to tell the difference between them have an easier time learning about letters.

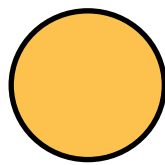
Level 1

Point out shapes around the house



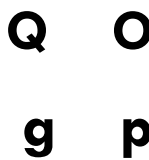
Level 2

Teach names of shapes



Level 3

Look for shapes in letters



Here's how ...

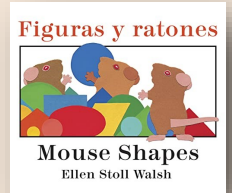


- ✦ Read shape books together. There are a wide variety of shape board books to interest your child.
- ✦ Go on a scavenger hunt to look for shapes around the house or in the community. Take a box or bag and collect round things, long things, blue things, etc.
- ✦ Point out shapes in familiar objects. "Your sandwich is a square shape. See, it has four straight sides, 1-2-3-4."

Read



Mouse Shapes / Figuras y ratones, by Ellen Stoll Walsh



What can you make with one oval, two circles, and eight triangles? Just ask three clever mice—who even find a funny way to trick a sneaky cat.

Ellen Stoll Walsh is the author and illustrator of many award-winning early concept books for young children. Look for some of these at your library:

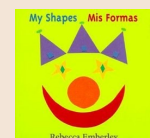
Mouse Paint
Mouse Shapes
Balancing Act
Hop Jump

Choosing Books



More shape books ...

- Baby's Shapes*, by Karen Katz
- Bear in a Square*, by Stella Blackstone
- Black and White*, by Tana Hoban
- Brown Rabbit's Shapes*, by Alan Baker
- Color Zoo*, by Lois Ehlert
- Freight Train*, by Donald Crews
- Look, Look Again*, by Agnese Baruzzi
- My Shapes / Mis formas*, by Rebecca Emberley
- My Very First Book of Shapes*, by Eric Carle





Make a touch and feel book: Cut cardboard into same-sized pieces. Put three holes on the left side of each piece. Tie pieces together with yarn or string. Glue one thing your baby or toddler likes on each page (keys, ribbon, spoon, a leaf). Talk about the things while your child touches them. “This is a shiny spoon; this is a soft, pink ribbon; this green leaf feels rough.”

Ready to Write



Cut out squares, rectangles, triangles, and circles from food boxes. Lay them out in front of your older toddler, and provide some bowls or containers. Ask them to find all the round shapes and put them in a bowl. Picking up the cardboard shapes uses your child’s little pincer muscles in their fingers, and putting them in the bowl requires hand-eye coordination. Now talk about the three sides of triangles, and ask them to put all the triangles in a bowl. They may need help counting the sides. When they are able to find circles and triangles, move on to squares and rectangles. If your child isn’t ready for this activity, just let them pick up all the shapes and put them in the bowl. Try again in a few months.

Sing



Three Gray Mice

This is a version of the song “Three Blind Mice,” but with a happier ending.

Three gray mice, three gray mice,
See how they run. See how they run.
They all were chased by the farmer's cat.
They ran and hid in an old straw hat.
Did you ever see such a sight as that?
Three gray mice, three gray mice.

Tune: <https://tinyurl.com/three-mice-tune>



Five Little Mice

Five little mice on the pantry floor,
(hold up five fingers)

This little mouse peeked behind the door.
(cup hands around face)

This little mouse nibbled at the cake,
(pretend to eat)

This little mouse not a sound did make.
(hold finger in front of mouth, “shhh”)

This little mouse took a bite of cheese,
(pretend to eat)

This little mouse heard the kitten sneeze.
(cup hand around ear)

“A-choo!” sneezed the kitten,

And “Squeak!” they cried,
(wave hands, excited)

As they found a hole and ran inside.
(run in place)



At your library ...



Screen time for babies and toddlers is not recommended. However, reading an occasional picture book with your little one on your device is one way to enjoy more great stories together. Ask your library if they have e-books available to download to your computer, phone, or tablet.