

Getting Ready for Kindergarten: Playing with Shapes, Patterns and Sorting

Young children learn important math skills through hands-on experiences and play. Exploring shapes, looking at and creating patterns and sorting things that are alike and different will help your child think like a mathematician!

Playing with shapes, patterns and sorting supports the following Lincoln County Schools kindergarten readiness skills:

- I can name four basic shapes (circle, square, triangle, and rectangle).
- I can make a simple pattern using objects, pictures, sounds, or movements.
- I can sort objects by color, shape, size, function, etc.

Here are some ways to help your child explore shapes.

- Let your child see and handle different shapes. As your child plays, talk about the name of the shape and some of the shape's characteristics. You can show your child that...
 - Circles are round, with a curved edge.
 - Triangles have three straight sides and three corners or points.
 - Rectangles have four straight sides and four corners.
 - Squares are special types of rectangles, with four sides that are all the same length.
- Encourage children to talk about and make shapes by arranging, putting together and taking apart different materials, such as cutting and folding paper; molding clay or playdough, or arranging blocks.
- Play games with shapes.
 - Find blocks of different shapes or cut shapes out of paper. Ask your child what you could make together with the shapes. Name and describe the shapes as your child works.
 - Have a "shape hunt." Draw or cut out different shapes. Give your child one of the shapes to hunt for around the house or while driving in the car.

Here are some ways to help your child explore patterns.

- Show your child different types of patterns. You can talk about:
 - Songs or movements that follow a pattern;
 - Events that occur in the same order or pattern each day such as mealtimes or bedtime routines;
 - Clothes or household items with repeated designs, alternating stripes, or other patterns;
 - Repeated words, phrases or pictures in stories and books;
 - Patterns in nature such as flowers, leaves, or the colors of an animal's fur.
- Help your child identify, repeat and create patterns.
 - Set out objects in a simple pattern, such as rock/stick/rock/stick. Name the objects as you place them. Invite your child to help you add more objects to keep the pattern going.
 - Repeat two movements such as clapping your hands then patting your legs. Ask your child to imitate what you're doing. Ask your child to help think of other movements you could do in a pattern.
 - Watch for opportunities to talk about patterns as your child draws or paints or when you're looking at artwork other people have made.



Here are some ways you can help your child explore sorting.

Go for a walk and let your child collect things like rocks, sticks or leaves. When you get home, talk about what your child found. Help your child look for things that are alike in some way. Use those ideas to help your child sort the things into group.

A conversation about sorting might go something like this.

Adult: "I see you found some smooth rocks. Here's one... and here's another one. Can you find any more smooth rocks?"

Child: "Here are some!" (Adult and child look for more smooth rocks and put them in a pile.)

Adult: "Here's a box for all your smooth rocks. I can make a label that tells us what's in the box. (Writes 'Smooth Rocks' on a sticky note and gives it to the child to put on the box.)

Child: "There aren't any more smooth rocks."

Adult: "Do you have any other types of rocks?"

Child: "Yeah – these ones with sparkles."

Adult: "Okay, we can put all the sparkly rocks in this box. And we can make a label that says 'Sparkly Rocks'

Note: You can do this type of activity with all sorts of different objects that your child finds interesting.

Show your child how things around your home or in stores are arranged in groups. For instance you can talk about:

- How dishes, silverware or other utensils are kept together in different spots in the kitchen.
- How you sort and/or put away laundry.
- How things that are alike are grouped together in different sections at the grocery store.

Turn sorting into a game that you and your child can play either inside or outside. It can even be used to make clean-up time more fun!

Here's what you do:

- Set out some boxes, baskets or other containers.
- Ask your child to help decide what could go in each container. Make a label for each container by writing down your child's ideas.
- Help your child search for things to go in each container.

Your child might enjoy finding and sorting...

Toys of different colors

Different types of clothes

Soft things and hard things

Different types of books

Blocks of different shapes

Different types of toy animals

Things that belong to different people in the family

Different types of sports equipment

Toy cars with different types of wheels

