

Shape: Early Learning Progression

Key Concept	Importance	Teaching and Learning Points
<p>Objects the same The key focus of this step is to help children become aware of the features or attributes of objects by finding objects that are alike.</p>	<p>This is important because looking for objects that are alike helps children become aware of their features, for example size or number of sides. Once children can recognise these features they can then use these to describe and sort objects.</p>	<p>Children begin by using their own vocabulary to describe objects. For example they may find two objects that are “pointy”, “big” or “like a house”. Informally introduce names for 2-dimensional shapes and 3-dimensional objects as opportunities present themselves.</p>
<p>Objects the same and different The key focus of this step is to encourage children to sort objects into groups that are alike and different. As they do this they are encouraged to think about the features of 2-dimensional shapes and 3-dimensional objects.</p>	<p>Sorting is important because it helps children to understand that objects can be grouped on the basis of their similarities. These understandings will later develop into knowledge of the different classes of 2-dimensional shapes and 3-dimensional objects and their properties.</p>	<p>It is important that children have experience with a rich variety of 2- and 3-dimensional shapes. Provide children with a variety of objects to sort; use both shape blocks and more informal materials such as buttons, bottle tops, boxes and containers. Asking children to re-sort a collection will encourage them to attend to a variety of features. For example, “I love the way you’ve sorted these into colours. Now let’s sort these red ones.”</p>
<p>Classifying objects The focus of this step is developing the understanding that groups of objects share features. For example, objects can be grouped by the number of sides or faces that they have.</p>	<p>This is important because 2 and 3 dimensional shapes are classified on the basis of their features. For example, all cubes have 6 faces and 8 corners (vertices). Classifying shapes into groups and describing these helps children develop these understandings.</p>	<p>In any sorting activity the children, not the educator, should decide how to sort. This ensures children use attributes they understand for sorting and provides the educator with an opportunity to observe known attributes. Children can then be encouraged to focus on unknown attributes to extend their knowledge.</p> <p>As children develop their understanding of classes of shape they will benefit by representing these through drawings, words, constructions and dramatisations.</p>