

Sometimes the simplest ideas are the best. These four shapes are hand-made from beautiful FSC beech wood. Perfect for all small-world play environments, children's imaginations will soar as they create little worlds of their own. The shapes offer the ideal opportunity to introduce and encourage the use of early mathematical language and the possibilities are endless.

## Shape of the week

Have a shape of the week – for example, a circle:

- Look around your setting with the children and find things that are a circle, such as a round table, a mat, the top of a cup or a plate.
- Talk about how big the objects are. Which is the smallest? Which is the biggest?
- Go outside with the children and look for circles all around, such as a STOP sign, a window etc.
- Find and collect lots of little things that are circles and put them on the Circle Shape Drive Around. You might find buttons, coasters, pebbles, wheels or slices of wood from your loose parts play area. Look at your collection of circles together and talk about what makes them the same, or different. Which is the biggest and which is the smallest circle?



- Don't forget to include the Shape of the Week in your artistic endeavors too. You might dip the top of a cup into some paint and make circular prints. Or maybe you have circular sponges to use with different colored paints.
- Play Eye Spy a Circle with older children, inside or outside. You can have some fun with this, looking for circles inside other shapes, such as the pupil in your eye or the lens on your camera. What can you find in the home corner?



- Sing Round and Round a Circle Like a Teddy Bear, and trace circles on the palm of your hands. You can do it to each other!
- Create circles in squidgy playdough. Use different size circular cutters and different colors of playdough. Use the Shape Drive Around Circle as the smooth base for your playdough play. Roll out the playdough and cut out lots of different sized and colored circles. For the older children describe them using more than one attribute – for example, 'the big, yellow circle'. Put the circles in order of size. Which is the biggest? Which is the smallest? Gather all the same size or same color circles together.

You can do all the above ideas with the shapes from each of the Shape Drive Arouns.

## Small-world play

Let's make a Shape Town, with Triangle Terrace, Circle Street, Rectangle Road and Square Square!

- With trees and houses, people and cars, let the children imagine their own world and play. Seize every opportunity to sprinkle in some mathematical language and thinking.
- Maybe the houses each have a different colored door, so you can match the red car to the red door, etc.
- Maybe each house has a car and a person and a tree and a dog.
- Maybe everyone who lives on Circle Street goes to visit everyone on Triangle Terrace, navigating around, across, over, turning left and right.
- Add some arches over the roads and you add lots of opportunities for language development – over and under, too big, too small, just right!



## Let's compare

For older children (preschoolers and kindergarten), the four shapes give lots of lovely mathematical concepts to explore.

Have you noticed that the circle fits perfectly inside the square, so the distance across the middle of the circle is the same as the length of each side of the square? Or that the rectangle is exactly half the size of the square – which means you could fit two rectangles inside the square? Or that all three sides of the triangle are the same length? (In fact, they are the same length as the side of the square and the long side of the rectangle!)

## Quiet time

Shape Drive Arounds have a lovely smooth, level base for play. With a collection of loose parts, playdough or both, they make a perfect base for creating mandalas. Just follow the edge and your imagination to create your own patterns.

## Everything changes but the learning stays the same

Children need to experience each mathematical concept over and over again – but tweaked and changed so it feels fresh and different. So don't be afraid to repeat activities but with a new seasonal twist. Maybe it is snowing in Circle Street, or there's an Easter Egg Hunt on Rectangle Road.



### *Get talking – useful words*

Shape, square, circle, triangle, rectangle, sides, inside, outside, edges, more, less, corner, bigger, smaller, diameter, under, over, through, compare.

## Books about towns and transport

*We Catch the Bus* by Katie Abey

*The Spiffiest Giant in Town* by Julia Donaldson

*Peekaboo Car* by Camilla Reid

*Busy Busy Town* by Richard Scarry