

Building Blocks
DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION
Geometry

- Dough Shapes: Flattening play dough is difficult for some children. Encourage them to try it, but have pre-flattened pieces ready to go on old cookie sheets. Then they can just cut the shapes.
- I Spy: Name an object and have the children guess the shape.
- Snack Time: Show a model.
- Circles and Cans: Cover the bottom of cans with different colors of paper. Traced circles are also the same color, then children can use the colored circles as cues.
- Feely Box: Trace the shapes onto a piece of poster board and display it in the center for children to use as a cue as they try to figure out what the shapes are.
- Match Shape Sets: Limit the number of shapes the child needs to match. Create several groups of shapes so that eventually, the student will match all of them, just not all at the same time.
- Pattern Block Cutouts: Begin completing the picture for the child. Place the first one or two shapes. Use a “talk aloud” strategy-“Let me see, this spot needs a shape with four equal sides. Here is a shape with four equal sides. Let me see whether it fits.” Once you have placed a few pieces, let the child take over with help as needed.
- Pattern Strips: Use only very familiar shapes such as the pattern block triangle and square for patterns. Give limited choices of which pattern block should go next, either verbally, or give two blocks and have the children decide which should be next. Or glue blocks together to make “units” and have the child use the units instead of individual blocks. To provide even more support, make 1 ABA unit and 1BAB unit. As long as they place these units in a linear fashion, they have to create a pattern.
- Rectangles and Boxes: Cover the bottom of the boxes with different colors of paper. Traced rectangles are also the same color, then children can use the colored rectangles as cues.
- Shape Step: Have children hold the shape from the shape set that corresponds to the shape that they are to step on. This serves as a visual cue. The shapes for the floor could be cut from felt.
- Straw Shapes: Provide a model for the child to copy. Two options: (a) make a model, and glue it to a piece of paper so that it will stay together, or (b) draw the shape (exact size), and have the child place the straws over the drawing to make the shape.
- Feely Box (Shapes): Reduce the number of choices from the second shape set. Or show the child a shape from the second shape set and ask him to show you “thumbs-up” if he thinks that is the shape in the feely box and “thumbs-down” if he doesn’t. Be certain to ask him for justifications.
- Guess My Rule: Give choices of the rule (has 2 sides or has 3 sides) or state rules as choices and have children show “thumbs up” or thumbs down” to show agreement or disagreement.
- Is It or Not?: As you name a shape, display that shape and keep it displayed (on the chalkboard or somewhere nearby) as you show other shapes and ask “Is it or not?” The displayed shape serves as a visual cue for children.
- Match and Name Shapes: Continue to ask children to name a shape; that is the ultimate objective. However, if a child does not know the shape or is struggling with the task, give him verbal choices of shape names. If the child is still struggling, present two different shapes, and ask him to show you to a specific shape. For example, display a square and a trapezoid, and ask him to pick up the square. Then have him feel the shape and describe it to you.
- Memory Number or Geometry: Flip over one card and then place it in front of the child, the child flips over another card; if it matches, he or she keeps the cards. If it doesn’t, leave it faceup and flip another card. Keep flipping cards until he or she finds a match.

Adapted from Clements, D. & Sarama, J. (2007) *SRA Real Math Building Blocks*. Teacher’s Edition. Grade PreK. Columbus, Ohio: SRA.

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- Shape Step: Have children hold the shape from the shape set they are to step on. This serves as a visual cue.
- Feely Box (Shapes): Give the child choices “Is it two cubes or three?” Hint: If a child is really struggling, put the correct choice last, he is more likely to “get it”. Be certain not to use this strategy for too long, or the child will always automatically pick the last choice.
- Mr. Mixup (Shapes): Begin by having Mr. Mixup say that shapes are the same when they are different. Once children are more firm on the vocabulary of shapes, do the activity as directed.
- Rectangles and Boxes: Outline each face of the box with a large marker. This should make it easier for children to distinguish the shape.
- Shape Flip Book: Initially remove some pages from the book, gradually adding them back as children become more familiar with the activity.
- Shape Show: Use numeral cards to label the sides as children count, then they can use the visual cue. Sing the properties of the shapes, rather than saying them. Many children find things easier to remember when put to music. Preview vocabulary terms that may be new to the child (shape names).
- The Shape of Things: Photocopy some pages from the book and ascent the shapes with color or even textures. Use scraps of fabric such as corduroy or satin cut to cover the shapes.
- Trapezoid: Preview the vocabulary with the student. Draw a “zoid” (a small furry creature, or anything else you can draw) “trapped” instead-hence the word trapezoid.