TOY CHEST

PRE-K3



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Language and Literacy

The Shape Game: Themed Alphabet

EZ.022.LA.1001-1002

Activity Type:
Large Group, Small Group, and Free Choice

Objectives:
Students will identify uppercase and lowercase letters.
Students will recognize shapes in their environment.

Each themed classroom includes a magnetic alphabet. A featured activity will be included with each themed magnetic alphabet. Everything we see in the world around us has a shape! We see two-dimensional shapes like squares, rectangles, circles, and ovals in objects like picture frames, coins, mirrors, and even letters. Learning how to recognize and identify shapes helps children visualize information that can be applied to the development of other skill sets. The large-scale shape game in the classroom can be used to reinforce shape identity.

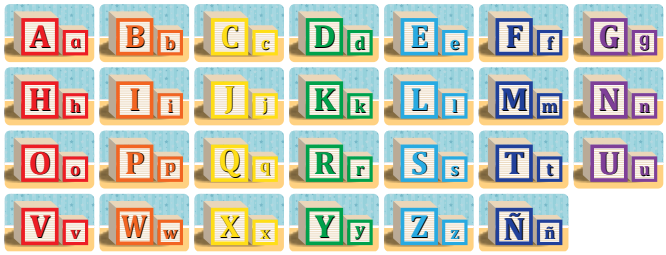
WHAT TO DO

1. Review the letters of the alphabet using the themed magnetic letters. As you are reviewing, be sure to point out the shapes of capital and lowercase letters. Read books about shapes like *The Shape of Things* by Dayle Ann Dodds, *Mouse Shapes* by Ellen Stoll Walsh and *Animal Shapes* by Christopher Silas Neal, drawing attention to common shapes throughout the stories and relating to common artifacts or objects found at home, in the environment, or at school.
2. Introduce the shape sorting center and shape wall game as free choice activities. Make connections between the two activities as students are beginning to recognize similar shapes. Point out the number of sides and points of each shape.

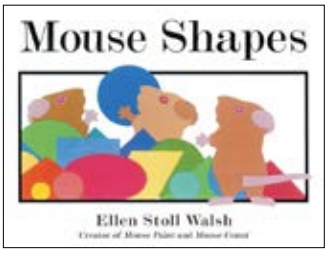
PLAY TIP

Try extending students' imaginations by playing other shape games. In a small group, draw a shape on a large piece of chart paper. Have students (or you) expand the shape to create something else (i.e., draw a circle and add eyes, nose, and a mouth to create a face). The idea is to help students consider that many objects and images begin with a simple shape.

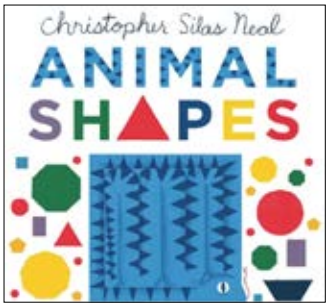
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Mathematics

Taking Measurements: Number Cards

EZ.022.LA.1003-1004

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will recognize numbers.
Students will compare length and weight of objects.

Each themed classroom includes themed number cards. A featured activity will be included with each set of themed number cards. Using common toys and both nonstandard (such as blocks, hands, or math links) and standard (such as rulers or measuring tapes) units of measurement, students begin to develop a foundational understanding of measurement concepts in a hands-on way. By physically manipulating objects and comparing their sizes, children enhance their spatial awareness and critical thinking skills. This interactive approach encourages curiosity and exploration, allowing students to extend their learning by seeking out additional items in the classroom to measure.

WHAT TO DO

1. Place the toys out for students to explore. Encourage students to measure the toys using the non-standard and standard tools. Ask questions such as, “Which toy is the longest?,” “Which toy is the shortest?,” and “How do you know?” Have students use the number cards to reinforce the length.
2. Encourage students to use the classroom balance to compare the weight of the toys. Ask the following reflection questions: “What do you notice as you put two toys in the balance buckets?” and “What do you think will happen if you switch them?” Have students use the number cards to reinforce the weight.

PLAY TIP

Students can find other items in the classroom to measure, even themselves! Ask students to measure a friend with the standard and non-standard tools.

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Mathematics

Counting and Measurement

EZ.022.LA.1005

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will count items up to 10 with one-to-one correspondence.
Students will begin to add to and take away items.
Students will begin to use nonstandard measurement tools.

Students use counting manipulatives, non-standard forms of measurement like Unifix Cubes, and themed counters, to practice one-to-one correspondence and early practices of measurement using themed math cards. Measurement can be an abstract concept for young children. Manipulatives like blocks, cubes, or cups provide a tangible way to understand concepts like length, and height. By physically comparing and ordering objects, they can build a foundation for understanding measurement units later.

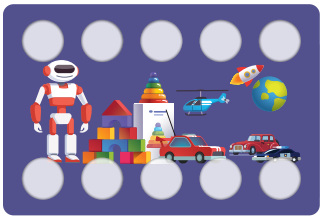
WHAT TO DO

After modeling how to use the mats, place the counting and measurement mats in a learning center as a teacher-directed or student-directed experience. As a teacher-directed experience, guide students to use manipulatives to show one-to-one correspondence and length. As a student-directed experience, allow students to freely explore the manipulatives and mats.

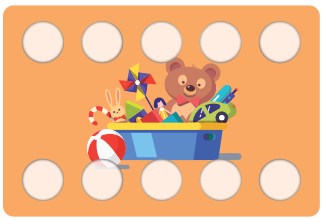
PLAY TIPS

- Use the math manipulatives to reinforce sorting by color and type. Encourage students to count how many are in each category. Encourage students to think of other ways to sort the manipulatives.
- Ask students to use the manipulatives to create patterns. Create simple pattern mats (ABAB, AABB, ABB) for additional support and guidance.

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Mathematics

Making Patterns

EZ.022.LA.1006

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will recognize common 2-D shapes.
Students will sort by features and attributes.
Students will recognize patterns.

Students explore patterns and properties of shapes as they create whole images using pattern blocks and themed pattern block mats. Pattern blocks boost students' ability to think critically, make predictions, and test their predictions.

WHAT TO DO

Pattern block mats and pattern blocks work well as a self-directed activity. The intuitive nature requires little direction. Place the mats and pattern blocks out for students to explore freely, encouraging students to match the pattern block shape and color to the correlating space on the whole image.

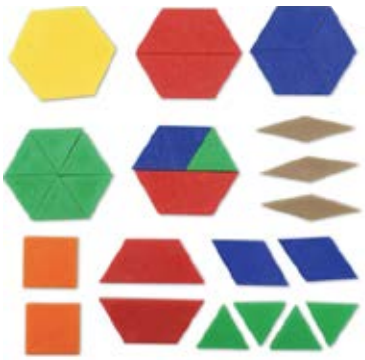
PLAY TIPS

- You can make your own pattern block cards by simply tracing pattern blocks on paper. Create a design using the pattern blocks and place the design on paper. Trace around the outer edge of your design and allow students to fill in the design with pattern blocks.
- Have students take a two-handed scoop of pattern blocks and sort by shape or color. Use graphing paper or a graphing mat to visualize the sorting process.
- Students can use mirrors to create patterns and make observations in the reflections. Ask students to describe what they are seeing as they create patterns in the mirrors.

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Language and Literacy

Pre-Writing Line Tracing

EZ.022.LA.1007

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will build pre-writing skills by tracing curved, notched, and zigzag lines. Students will recognize directionality in print and writing.

Students work on emergent literacy and transition to letter formations by tracing lines, patterns, and shapes with a theme in a dry erase, reusable format. To connect to fine motor development, students are encouraged to add detail. Themed templates are included for tracing.

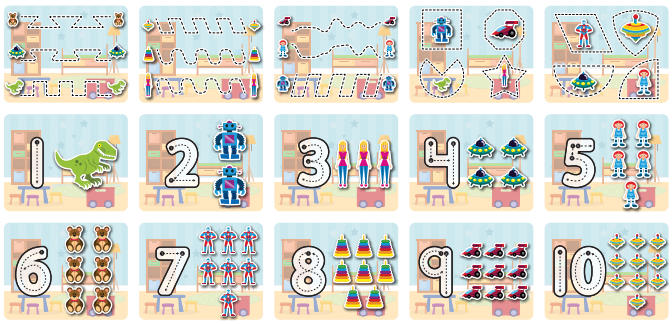
WHAT TO DO

1. Place the dry erase templates in the writing center. Students have the choice to use dry erase markers on the dry erase templates or place paper on the template and trace using a pencil/crayon. Remind students to start from left to right and top to bottom.
2. Encourage students to make their own tracing templates using the dry erase templates as a guide. Students can work on tracing shapes, lines, and numbers by repetitively tracing the same shape, line, or number using a different color crayon each time.

PLAY TIPS

- Include the themed tracing patterns in the writing center to align with other free-choice writing exercises. Using a clipboard will help students control the writing utensil.
- Tape the template vertically, on an easel or teacher board, to encourage the strengthening of fine motor development.

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Language and Literacy

Syllable Awareness

EZ.022.LA.1009

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to blend and segment syllables in words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Recognizing that words can be broken down into syllables or units of sound is a phonological skill.

WHAT TO DO

Introduce the vocabulary cards as a guided activity or free choice center activity. Have students clap the number of beats on the vocabulary card and indicate the number by moving the clip.

PLAY TIPS

- Provide simple instruments to reinforce the number of syllables. Rather than clap the number of syllables in a word, students can shake the number of syllables.
- Students can use their body to emphasize syllables in a word. Have students jump up and down, tap their toes, march in place, do jumping jacks, or tap their head to count syllables.

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Language and Literacy

Connect Links Rhyming Awareness

EZ.022.LA.1010

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to recognize rhyming words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Rhyming activities help children listen for ending sounds in words, a precursor to phonics activities in late preschool.

WHAT TO DO

In a small group, show students the rhyming cards while identifying each item. Have students say the name of the item. Identify two items that rhyme and model using the link-n-learns to connect the items. You can continue the activity as a small group or place in a free choice center for students to continue individually.

PLAY TIP

Play the rhyming name game. Use made-up words to rhyme with students' names. For example, say "If your name rhymes with misa, touch your head," and Lisa touches their head. This activity works well during circle time or transition periods.

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Language and Literacy

Onset and Rime Awareness

EZ.022.LA.1011

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to identify and segment one-syllable words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Onset and rime activities help children identify patterns in words.

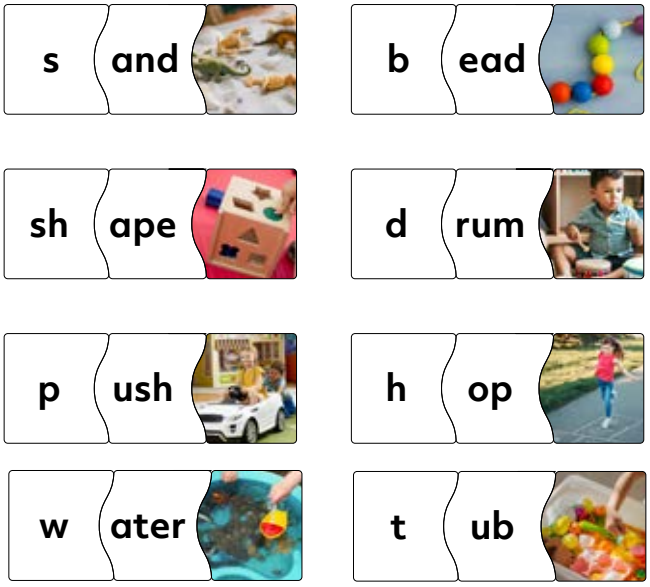
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the picture puzzles as a small group or free choice activity. As a small group exercise, model saying the onset together, the rime together, and the picture that identifies the word. As a free choice exercise, have the students put the pieces together to create a word.

PLAY TIP

Attach beginning and ending sounds to a set (2) of large dice. Have students roll the dice and say the word created, putting the onset and rime together.

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Language and Literacy

Cotton Swab Painting: Word Bank Words

EZ.022.LA.1012

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify letters of the alphabet.
Students will create letters of the alphabet in unconventional ways.

Each themed classroom includes a word bank. A featured activity will be included with each themed word bank. Students will work on developing prewriting skills by exploring a variety of writing materials. Using paper, paint, and cotton swabs, students can practice writing word bank words, their name, letter sequencing, and other drawing activities of their choosing. Free writing is a powerful tool in preschool because it supports young children in developing their language skills, thinking creatively, and building confidence in their abilities.

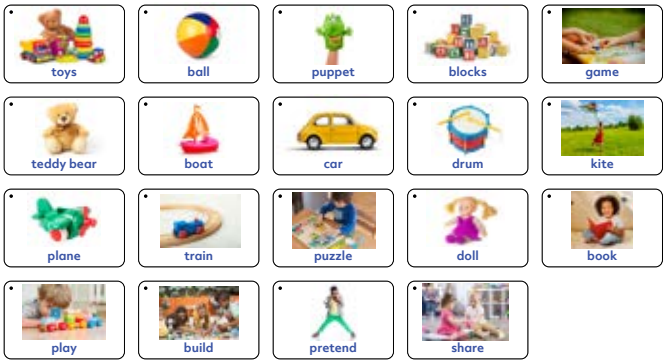
WHAT TO DO

Place the word bank words, printing paper, cotton swabs, and small bowls of paint in the writing center. Students can practice writing word bank words, their name, and/or the alphabet with the unconventional writing materials. Students can also use the materials to draw or paint in open-ended ways.

PLAY TIPS

- Write out letters or word bank words on paper or sentence strips (tracing) for students who need additional support.
- Provide opportunities for students to paint freely with the cotton swabs.

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Mathematics

Building Shapes

EZ.022.LA.1013

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objective:
Students will recognize and recreate shapes with manipulatives.

Recognizing and recreating shapes is fundamental to building and constructing. Students practice making shapes using craft sticks and identification cards. With guidance, students can also identify shapes and encourage discussions about their characteristics, such as the number of sides and corners (vertices). This hands-on activity strengthens spatial awareness and critical thinking skills, laying the groundwork for future math and engineering concepts.

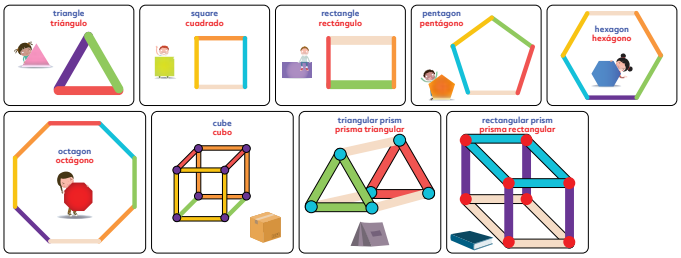
WHAT TO DO

Spread out the shape mats in a free-choice center or as part of a small group experience. Place the craft sticks on the table. Ask students to recreate the shapes using the craft sticks. Students can lay the craft sticks directly on the mat (match) or recreate by sight. As students are recreating, ask questions such as, “How many craft sticks will you need to recreate this shape?” and “Can you think of additional shapes to make (outside of the shape mats)?”

PLAY TIPS

- After students have created shapes using the craft sticks, they can glue them together as shape references for future activities.
- Add Velcro to each end of the craft sticks (using identical Velcro surfaces on each side) and encourage students to build shapes. The Velcro allows the craft sticks to be reused for multiple activities.
- Create 3D shapes using Play-Doh as an adhesive. With the support of an adult, encourage students to build 3D shapes using the 3D shape mats. Provide a variety of materials, such as craft sticks, toothpicks, and straws for constructing 3D shapes.

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Social and Emotional

Feelings Mats

EZ.022.LA.1014

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will begin to understand the idea of self-concept.
Students will recognize, verbalize, and reinforce emotions.

Emotions are how we express and understand our feelings. Young children develop emotional awareness through hands-on experiences and meaningful conversations. One engaging way to explore emotions is by reading books that introduce different feelings and then using Play-Doh to create facial expressions on face mats. This activity not only reinforces emotional recognition but also enhances fine motor skills, creativity, and social-emotional learning by encouraging discussions about feelings in an interactive way.

WHAT TO DO

1. Read several books about emotions and feelings such as *The Pigeon Has Feelings Too* by Mo Willems and *The Feelings Book* by Todd Parr. Be sure to review each emotion as it is portrayed in the books and ask students to think of a time when they felt that emotion.
2. Show students the feeling mats and demonstrate manipulating the Play-Doh to create facial features (i.e. rolling the Play-Doh to make eyes and stretching the Play-Doh to make a curved mouth). Provide students with the self-directed mats while reiterating the emotions from the stories.

PLAY TIPS

- Talk about the emotion as you read the word on the mat. For example, say "Let's make a sad face because the mat has the word 'sad.' How do your eyes look when you are sad? How does your mouth move when you are sad?"
- Photocopy the feeling mats and encourage students to draw emotions using markers or crayons.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED


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12.5" x 8.3"


LA.022.1014A
8.8" x 10"


LA.022.1014A
8.4" x 10"


LA.022.1014A
7.78" x 10"

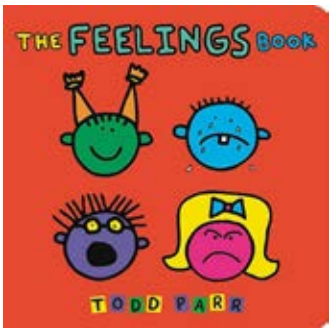

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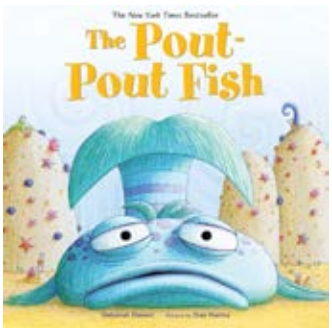

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LA.022.1014A
8.25" x 10"









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Fine and Gross Motor

Toy Land Yoga

EZ.022.LA.1015

Activity Type:
Small Group, Large Group, Routine, and Transitions

Objective:
Students will develop gross motor movements to control mind and body.

Yoga supports students in developing concentration, body control, and patience while also enhancing gross motor skills such as flexibility, strength, and balance. With toy land yoga, children engage their imagination as they learn yoga poses that mimic the movements of various toys, making the experience both educational and fun.

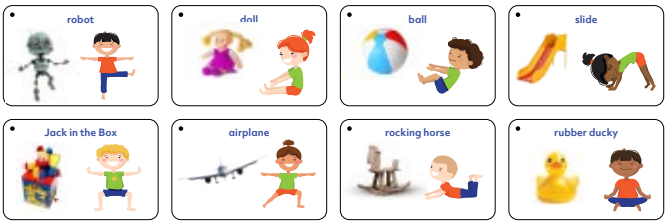
WHAT TO DO

1. Yoga in the classroom is wonderful as it can be used in many different ways. As a large group activity, provide students with an item that designates their personal space, such as a sticker or piece of paper. As a small group activity, pass out individual yoga mats to work on specific body movements. Incorporate yoga into daily routines and transitions to help build confidence and find a sense of calm.
2. Display toy land yoga poses, one at a time, starting with small intervals of 15-20 seconds. As students become accustomed to the routine and practice, slowly increase the amount of time engaged in a pose.

PLAY TIPS

- Plan on modeling yoga poses for your students. If you are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with yoga poses, introduce child-friendly demonstration videos.
- Have students move and make sounds a toy might make as they are practicing yoga poses.
- Follow yoga with an activity that is quiet and reflective, like journaling, independent reading, or rest time.

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Play-Based Learning Materials

Fine Arts:









Fine and Gross Motor:



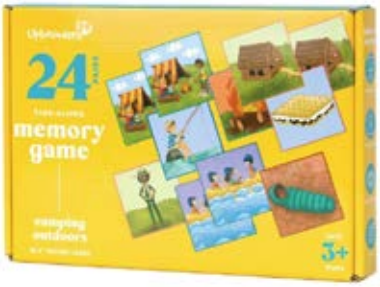





Games:







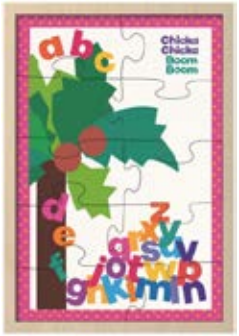


Science:






Puzzles:







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