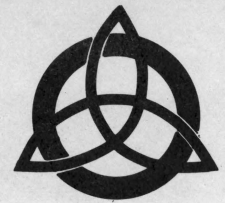


HOME ECONOMICS

GUIDE



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Learning Is Child's Play

Feelie Bag

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Preschool children learn continuously whether they are playing or just gazing at the clouds. However, touching is one of the first and most important ways that children are able to learn. They love to touch, to find out how objects feel. They soon learn to identify objects by the way they feel.

Developing the ability to identify and name shapes is important preparation for later learning. Children learn to use this information to describe the familiar as well as new and complex objects.

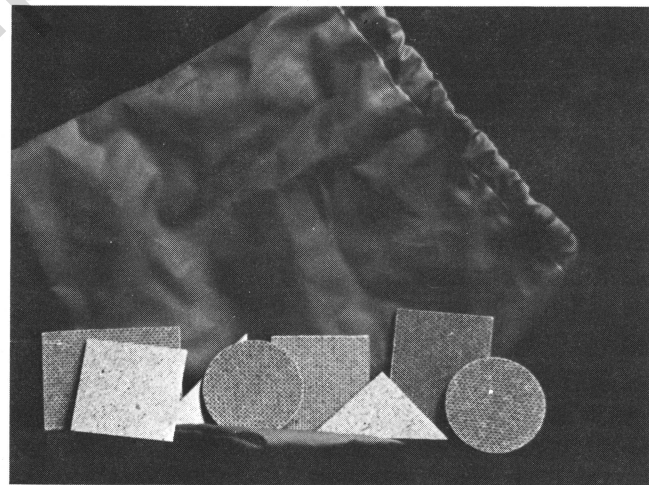
Whether they realize it or not, parents are the first teachers of children. Long before school days begin, children are learning about the world by living and interacting with those who care for them. As infants, much of this early care consists of being fed, cuddled, changed, and bathed. The sense of touch is important to all these activities, and babies quickly respond to feelings of tenseness or relaxation when they are touched.

As children grow older and continue to learn through touching, it's still important that they are played with in a happy, relaxed manner. Talk with, listen to, and encourage your child. Children need to feel they can solve problems and that their opinions are respected. Spending time in a shared game can help children gain self-confidence and improve their relationship with their parents.

Description

A simple game to help children recognize the basic shapes—circle, square, triangle, and rectangle—is the *Feelie Bag*. You can make this game easily at little expense.

The game consists of a drawstring bag with two sets of cut-out shapes, preferably from masonite or similar strong material. There are two squares, two circles, two triangles, and two rectangles.



Feelie Bag

Purpose

The *Feelie Bag* helps children learn to recognize shapes by touch as well as by sight.

Game I

This game helps children learn how shapes look and feel. Children learn to identify shapes by feeling their edges and pairing each with the shape the parent holds.

Put one set of shapes in the sack and the other on the floor next to you and your child. From the set on the floor pick up one shape, for example a circle. Now, ask your child to reach into the bag and select the same shape as the one you have.

The idea is for the child to feel the shapes in the bag without looking. If the child does look, continue the game and ask the child to find the shape without looking. If the child persists, hold the *Feelie Bag* so he or she can't see inside.



Responding to mismatched shapes is also an important part of the game. If the child selects a circle to match the square you're holding, compare the two shapes and explain that the shapes don't match. For example, "You have a circle. My shape is a square. They are different. Try again." Avoid saying that the child is wrong.

If the child selects a shape that matches yours, explain in specific words the kind of shape they are and that they are both alike. Also be sure to praise the child. You can continue with this game until all the shapes are out of the bag.

Game II

Another game helps children recognize shapes by sight and by feel. The child feels a shape that has been tucked inside the drawstring bag. Then, the child must find the shape from the set that is outside that looks like the shape the child felt inside the bag.

Be sure one set of each of the four shapes is in plain view, while the other set is hidden from your child's view. Then, have the child close his or her eyes while you put one single shape inside the bag.

Say, "Feel the shape inside the bag and, without looking at it, find a shape from the outside that is the same." If the child selects a different shape, say that they aren't the same. "These shapes aren't the same. Try again." By avoiding the word wrong, you help the child believe in him or herself and feel confident enough to enjoy this learning game.

When the child matches the shapes correctly, hold them close together. This reinforces their sameness. "They are the same shape. They are both circles."

Game III

In the previous games you asked your child only to match shapes. It's also important for the child to be able to identify the shapes by name. Put the four different shapes in a pile. Pick them up one at a time and say, "Each shape has a name. This one is called a square, etc."

After you have done this at least twice and you feel that your child is becoming aware of the names, ask your child to look at all the shapes. Then say, "I am thinking of a shape. It's round and has no straight sides. Can you guess what it is?" Or, "I am thinking of a shape. It has three sides. Can you name it?"

Continue the game, making your hints easier or harder depending on the child's ability to identify and name the shape. The clue should not be so easy that the game is boring nor so hard that it's frustrating. When the child becomes skilled at the game, you can take turns at giving the clues and see if you can guess which shape is being described.

This game not only gives the child practice at identifying shapes but also teaches good observation skills.

Game IV

Put the four shapes from the *Feelie Bag* in a pile and ask the child to choose one. When the child has made a selection, ask the child to look around the room and see if he or she can find a shape similar to the one selected. After the child identifies an object, have him or her choose another shape and continue the game.

Typical objects a child might select would include a rectangular window, door, or book; a plate, flowerpot, or wastebasket opening in the shape of a circle; a square table, napkin, or floor tile; or a triangular coat hanger.

The child may need some help at first in identifying similar shapes since this is a more difficult job than identifying the objects in the *Feelie Bag*.

Summary

The ability to identify and name shapes is important preparation for later learning. Games like the *Feelie Bag* help a child learn to recognize shapes by feel as well as sight.

Feeling, comparing, identifying, and naming are skills needed throughout life, and these games provide an enjoyable way to help children understand more of their world. Your awareness of how children learn and what they need to know will help them as they explore and try to understand their environment.