

Shapes away to learning fun with a 'shape sorter'!

We've all given a "shape sorter" cube to a new mother but have you ever stopped to think why it's so useful? The answer lies in the assortment of shapes, colours, physical and visual skills that it offers all in the one box.

With this simple toy your child can:

- match a shape to the correct hole on a shape sorter cube and let each piece drop into the hole
- open the lid to tip the block out and start all over again
- sort all the green blocks together regardless of shape
- sort all the round blocks together regardless of colour

The shape sorter allows your child to strengthen their hand-eye coordination, fine motor and problem-solving skills, as well develop their vocabulary knowledge (e.g. being able to identify and name shapes).

Tips to making the most of the shape sorter include:

- **Understanding/recognising shapes:** Hide the shapes around the room and ask your child to find a particular shape.
- **Naming shapes:** Encourage your child to name a shape before placing it in the sorter.
- **Turn taking:** Encourage your child to take turns in placing shapes into the sorter and talk about whose turn it is (e.g. "My turn", "Your turn").
- **Commenting:** Talk about what happens when your child has chosen a shape to place into the sorter (e.g. "It doesn't fit. Let's try another hole")

when the shape doesn't match the selected hole; "Whoosh. It fell in!" when the shape falls through the correct hole).

- **Requesting:** Give your child the shape sorter cube and place the shapes in front of them. Encourage your child to ask for the shape that they want before providing it to them (e.g. 'I want the circle/square/triangle please').
- **Problem solving:** When your child has difficulty placing a shape in the correct hole, encourage them to try again and give them tips if they have trouble placing the shape appropriately into the hole (e.g. "That's the right hole! Turn the shape around. Now it fits!").
- **Counting:** Encourage counting skills by asking your child to count the blocks.
- **Following instructions:** Place the shapes next to the shaper sorter. Ask your child to place specific shapes into the sorter. Give them an instruction to follow depending on their skill level (i.e. One level instructions such as "Find the **circle**"; 2 step instructions such as "Find the **circle** and the **square**"). Once your child is familiar with both shapes and colours, encourage them to find a specific coloured shape (e.g. "Show me the **blue square**"). Also, you can take it in turns to give each other instructions so that your child starts to learn about turn taking and joint interactions.
- **Concepts including:**
 - **in/out/on:** Get your child to place a specific shape in relation to the sorter (e.g. "Put the circle **in/on** the cube", "Take the circle **out** of the cube").
 - **same/different:** During play, model the concepts same/different when comparing two shapes (e.g. "I have two circles. They are the **same** shape"; "You have a triangle and a circle. They are **different** shapes") or comparing colours (e.g. "I have a blue circle and blue triangle. They are the **same** colour"; "I have a blue circle and red triangle. They are **different** colours").
 - **colours:** Develop your child's understanding of colours. Encourage them to group items that are the same colour (e.g. **yellow/blue** shapes).

How is this toy helpful?

Using the fun ideas above, the “shape sorter” can teach children to improve their play, social interactions, turn-taking, attention and listening, understanding and use of language and fine motor skills. These are some of the skills needed for occasional care and kindy.

Where can you buy this?

The “shape sorter” cube can be bought from Target, Toys R Us, Big W or Kmart.

For more information on the “shape sorter” cube or other suggestions for how to use this great toy, please [contact](#) our friendly Speech Pathologists and Occupational Therapists at [Kid Sense Child Development](#).

Contact us today to make an initial enquiry or book an assessment for your child
on 1800 KID SENSE (1800 543 736)

