Family Fun with Math: Shape Hunt

Math learning can happen anytime! Here are a few ideas to help your children see the math all around them.

Why 'Shape Hunting'?

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Shapes are everywhere! Everything is its own shape and/or made from multiple shapes, if you just look closely enough. They are important in early math learning, as they support children in learning about their world, spatial awareness, geometry, building, and so much more! Take a moment to notice what shapes are all around you, and enjoy some fun activities to support your children's shape identification, counting, and classifying skills!

Try it Out: Take a Walk and Start Hunting!

- Grab a clipboard, white paper, and a writing utensil. On the paper, draw out a table with columns and a row at the top like the example to the right.
- Start your walk or watch the world from your window, and encourage your child to notice shapes in the world. As they see a new shape, have them draw it in that top row above a column – helping them as needed – and then they record each sighting of a shape with a single, vertical tally line.
- At the end of your walk, there should be several shapes at the top of the columns (start new pages as needed!) and tally lines under each shape in the columns. Now you can help your child count each line in a group – Tips: point at each line while you count it, and wait a few seconds if your child gets stuck before giving them the next number!
- Help your child write out the final number they get to - it doesn't matter if they get the right one or not, or if they skip numbers, it's the act of counting and then representing the final amount with a number that is important!

Talk about It:

- *Ask before, during, and after your hunt to get your child thinking about shapes:*
  - What shapes do you think we'll find? Where do you think we'll find them?
  - What shape(s) can you see?
  - How do you know that is a ___?
  - How many flat sides/corners does that shape have? What shape is then?
  - What kinds of shapes did we find? How many?
  - Where there any shapes we didn't find?
  - Which shape group has more? Which has less? What is the difference between ____ groups?
  - [see below for alternatives to these questions if your child is still working on their language skills]
- *Talk About: 'What if . . . ?'*
  - Have a conversation with your child about what would happen if certain shapes in

the real world were a different shape. For example, circular wheels were squares, doors were triangles, etc. Make it goofy and ridiculous!

- *Play :'Shape Bingo'!*
    - For a follow up walk/window-watching activity, take pieces of white paper and create a bingo sheet with shapes in the boxes for you and your children (see example to the right).
    - As you go through your walk/window watching, you and your child can 'compete' to see who can find all the shapes on your sheet first! The rules:
        - You have to name the shape that you see
        - Cross or stamp it off on your sheet
        - The other person can't use the same object to cross of the same shape on their sheet.

Make it Work for Your Child:

- Scaffold your support – let your child try it first, offer your support, then given the least amount of amount you think they need to succeed. You can do this at any stage of the above activities!
- Use card stock with shapes cut out (see example to right) as a shape identification aid. Children can hold this tool up to shapes to help identify what they see!
- Print out real world examples of shapes and stick them at the top of the columns instead of drawing them out. Children may need help to begin thinking of their world in terms of the shapes they see.

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- You could also hunt for flowers, leaves, rocks, cars, etc. and tally your sightings of them based on color, size, type, etc. instead of looking for shapes. There's a lot of valuable math learning in these activities that can be adapted for different objects.
- Young children are still working on their language skills, and if responding to questions and having in-depth conversations is still a work-in-progress, try:
    - Talking about what you see and think about the shapes around you
    - Asking questions, waiting a few seconds, and then answering your own question and explaining your reasoning (i.e. "It is ___ because ___")

Make it Work for Your Family:

- How could older or younger siblings participate?
    - Younger children can participate using any of the above accommodations plus:

        - Using stamps instead of tallies to record shape sightings
    - Older children participate by:
        - Graphing the results from their shape hunt
        - Using real tally marks (𝍸)
- How could the whole family play together?
    - Create teams in the family or with friends/extended family and go on another shape hunt. This can be in the same community or across the country. What about video chatting while hunting? Taking photos of the shapes you see to compare what the shapes in your area looks like? Who gets the most shapes? Are there different shapes in the different areas?