



24 Preschool Transition Activities You Can Use Starting Today!

from Miss Cheryl at [Preschool Plan It](#)

Transition times are a part of life—for adults and preschoolers! We have a transition in between leaving the house for work and getting there—the commute! Be it short or long, but it is a transition: a time between one activity and another. What do YOU do during your commute? There are transition activities you can do such as listen to the radio, a book on CD or just enjoy the silence (other than the cars around you!).

Preschoolers' days, as you know, are filled with transitions. There are natural transition times—those times you can plan for— and unexpected transition times. How you plan for them will determine if they are productive or if they are reasons for behavior issues.

An unexpected transition time might be when you and the children are outside waiting for the fire truck to arrive for their visit. Even a 10 minute or less wait can feel like an hour! If you have a Transition Activity Bag, you'll know what to do when these times happen.

Natural transition times happen throughout the day whether you have them on your schedule or not! These are the times when children are going from one activity to another or waiting for an activity to begin. Here are two examples:

Example 1: Coming To Circle

The children are cleaning up the puzzles you had out as an arrival activity and then coming to Circle. 12 of your 16 children are at Circle already and the other 4 are finishing up their puzzles. What do you do? Rush the children finishing by saying "Are you almost done? Your friends are waiting for you to begin Circle!"? Do you tell the waiting children, "We have a fun activity to do at Circle Time today"? We're just going to wait for all of our friends to join us!" Instead, this is a good time to bring out a transition activity before you begin Circle Time.

Example 2: Washing Hands Before Snack or Lunch

This is a natural transition time that happens between 1-3 times a day, depending on the length of your day. You only have so many sinks! Therefore, you know there will be children waiting to wash hands and others waiting to begin snack.

What do you do? Have the children who are done and who are waiting to wash hands, sit and "chat amongst themselves" while their friends wash their hands? Mhmmm...that never works out well! Again, this is a perfect time to pull out a transition activity!

Preschool Transition Activities

Below are 24 ideas you can begin using today! 6 of them are from my [Transition Activities article](#). Read that for help on how to incorporate transition times into your daily schedule.

To organize them, place each of the activity's materials in a large, Ziploc baggie (the gallon size) and print the name of the activity on the outside of the baggie.

Place all of these activities into a decorated shoe box, bin or canvas bag labeled "Transition Activity Bag". Now, when you have a transition time, just grab the box or bag, reach in and choose one!

1. Guess the Pattern

Place 10 items in a bag. I use blocks, bristle blocks, sorters/counters, crayons and markers-anything from the classroom! Bring 5 of each item. Begin a pattern: crayon, marker, crayon, marker, crayon...what comes next? Keep creating patterns until all children have washed their hands and had a turn. In a large Ziploc baggie place many items to use such as: 5 markers, 5 crayons, 5 each of blue, red, yellow and green bristle blocks, etc.

2. Shuffle Song Time*

This has been a favorite over the years!

- Make an index card for each of your favorite songs with a simple picture on each so the children can "read" it also!
- Make at least 5 cards. Laminate them for durability.

During a transition time, pull the cards out and begin shuffling them. Our kids love when I shuffle the cards while saying "Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle....." and then they all yell "STOP". Whichever card is on the top is the one we sing. Then do the next one. Some to get you started:

Itsy, Bitsy Spider
Twinkle, Twinkle
ABCs
Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes
Hokey Pokey
If You're Happy and You Know It

3. Make a Letter or Number

Bring a large piece of paper and some markers. Practice making either a specific letter together or they can make and name their favorite letter. You can also practice number making!

4. Mystery Bag

Show the children 4 or 5 items. Place one in the bag. Have one child feel in the bag and try to guess what it is without looking. Let each child have a turn while others wash their hands. We made a bag out of extra fabric and cut out and glued on a fabric question mark. Place about 15 items in this bag and store in your transition box or bin. You'll never run out of items for this great feely bag!

Preschool Transition Activities

5. Counting Practice

Give the children a paper cup. Ask them to count out 5 pom poms into the cup. I use this as a transition activity while waiting to wash hands. 4 children do this and then wash their hands. I then have 4 more children have a turn. Between children, empty the cup and choose a different number for the next group of children to count into the cups. Time filler, one-to-one correspondence practice and counting practice all rolled into a 4 minute transition time!

6. Get the Wiggles Out

Finger play:

I wiggle my fingers and then my toes.
I wiggle my shoulders and then my nose.
The wiggles are gone--there are no more in me!
So now I can sit still...as still as still can be! Shhhhhhhhh!

7. Time to Hop!

When transitioning to another activity, try hopping for a while first!
Let's hop to line up!
Hop on one foot and count 5 hops.
Then hop the rest of the way on two feet.
Let's hop to the bathroom.
Let's hop in a circle!

8. Whose Name is this?

Materials Needed: Premade index cards or colored paper--one for each child--with their first name on the front and their last name on the back.

(I have also made a 2nd set of these cards that has the children's photograph on the card. This helps children who do not yet recognize their name in print to see it in print!).

Use these cards for transition activities any time you need it!

Idea #1: Have the children sit down and tell them to stand up only when you hold up their name (use the cards based on their recognition level of their name--picture, first name, last name)

Idea #2: Each child comes up to you to take their first name tag when you hold it up and then sit back down.

You then hold up a last name card. If the child recognizes it, great!

If not, say the last name. The child whose name it is then comes to give you their first name card.

Ask them to say their full name or you say it.
That child then goes to the activity you are going to (the next activity, the bathroom, line up, etc.).

Preschool Transition Activities

9. Which Letter Is This?*

Materials Needed: Premade sets of letters (2 sets).

Give each child a letter.

Place the matching letters on the floor.

Each child, one at a time, comes up and places their letter on its matching letter.

10. Lower & Upper Case Match*

Have the children match an upper case letter to a lower case letter.

11. Match The Numbers*

Give children matching sets of numbers (i.e. give 2 children the number 2, 2 children the number 3) and have them find their partner with the matching numbers.

12. Match The Dots*

Create cards with numbers and then cards with the corresponding number of dots. Have the children match their number to the set of dots.

13. Color Match*

Cut out different pieces of paper of different colors (2 sets of each color) for the children to match.

14. Shape Match*

Cut out shapes (either of the same or different colors)-make 2 of each shape-for the children to match.

15. Moving from One Area to Another

Thank you Missy from Salinas, CA for this idea!

After mid-morning snack, my preschoolers walk through the hallway, and then sit on the carpet for circle time. To help in the transition from A to B, I throw a rope from the snack to the beginning of our classroom (approx. 10ft).

I then tell the kids we're walking on the bridge over hot lava or a swamp filled with alligators. They really go along with balancing and getting to the other side without falling off the bridge. The carpet is the "safe" zone.

16. I Spy

Of course! I Spy with my little eye, someone wearing a shirt that has Mario on it. Who is that? Yes, it's Joey! I Spy.....etc.!

Write different ideas for I Spy games on a large index card (so you don't run out of ideas!) such as "shoes, sneakers, shirt colors, hair color, eye color, square items, circle items, etc.).

Preschool Transition Activities

17. Tong Time!

Thank you Rebecca from NY for this idea!

I purchased small tongs for clean-up time. Instead of telling the kids to clean up I just turn off the lights and put out the basket of tongs.

Once they each get a pair of tongs, we start singing our favorite songs while they use them to pick up the toys and put them away.

This is great for fine motor and the children don't even realize they are cleaning and not playing!

When we have a few extra minutes, after the kids get all the blocks cleaned up I will dump it out and we do it again, naming the color of the blocks as they drop them in the bucket!

The kids absolutely love this and it has made cleanup time so much easier!

18. What's Missing?

Bring 5 or 6 items with you. Show them to the children. They all close their eyes (or you cover the items with a paper towel!) and remove one item. The children open their eyes and as a group, say what's missing. Do this with 2 items, and then send a set amount of children to wash their hands. Continue playing the game until all the children have washed hands and had a turn.

19. Circle Time Transition Fun!

Thank you to Barb from Gilbert, AZ for this activity!

For transitions or children struggling to sit still, I use positional words and have the children stand up to act them out such as:

Shake your hands above you.

Shake your hands behind you.

Shake your hands under you (that is their favorite).

Sometimes I have the children jump up and down and count to a certain number. This helps to get the wiggles out while still learning important words as well as practice counting.

They love it and always laugh when we put our hands under us! I also have the children touch their body parts such as:

Touch your nose, elbow, ear, etc. We like to do this slow and fast as well and they think it is really silly!

20. Hand Washing Song

Thanks Sharon N. for this activity idea!

Wash, Wash, Wash your hands,

Wash the germs away,

Wash, Wash, Wash your hands,

Wash them every day!

Preschool Transition Activities

21. Front, Back, In-Between Hand Washing Song

Sing this song 2-3 times while the children wash their hands:

Front, back, in-between.

That's how we get our hands so clean!

*There is a hand-washing poster in this packet for you!

22. Puppets!

Puppets are a wonderful way to get and keep children's attention. Have a puppet available to use to talk to the children and let them know what they should be doing or what the next activity will be!

23. On Our Way Outside!

Thank you Sharon N. for this song!

This could be sung to the tune of The Farmer in the Dell:

It's fun to play outside.

It's fun to play outside.

With all the other boys and girls

It's fun to play outside.

Miss Cheryl's note: You could change the word outside to whichever "destination" you are heading to!

24. Discovery Bottles

This is one of my favorite transition activities! Create these throughout the year. Keep them in a bin somewhere accessible. When you need to keep the children occupied for a short period of time (for example, while waiting for some friends to put on their jackets), pull out the discovery bottle bin!

Discovery bottles can have sand or water with items inside to find or look at!

For easier holding by the children, use 1 liter bottles instead of 2 liter bottles.

Hot glue covers on after you have made them!

Try:

2/3 water, 1/4 vegetable oil (wave bottle)

Add water to the bottle above.

Add sand and letter beads for children to find.

Add sea shells and sand.

Add magnetic items into a bottle with table salt, Tie a magnet wand around the top. The children use the wand to bring magnetic items to the sides of the bottles.

Water and glitter.

Add food coloring to color any of the bottles with water in them!



Shuffle Song Cards



Match the Numbers

1

2

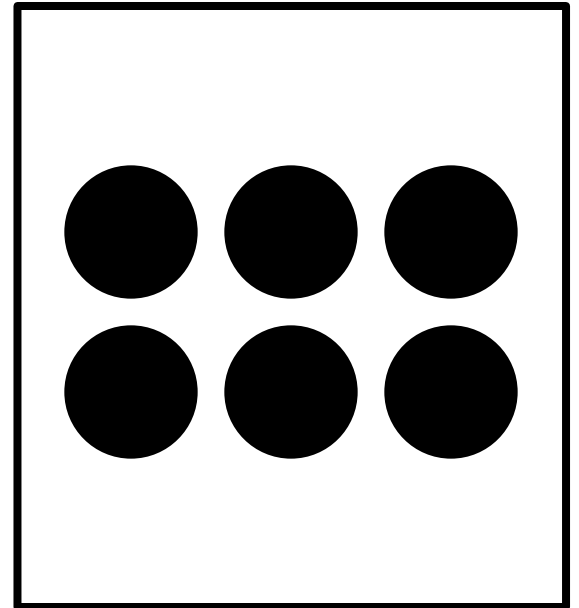
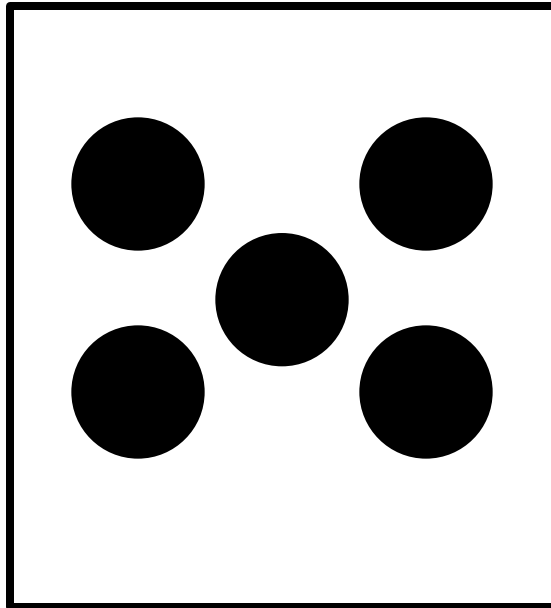
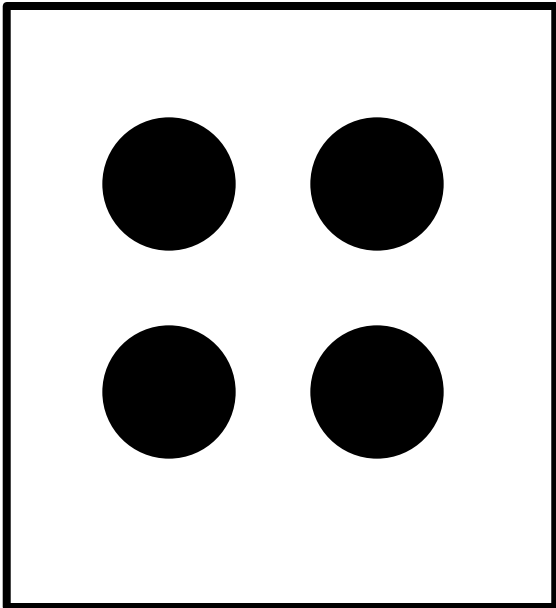
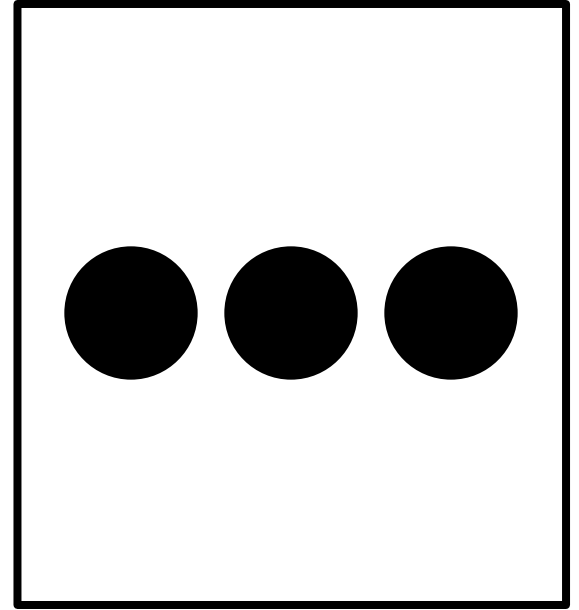
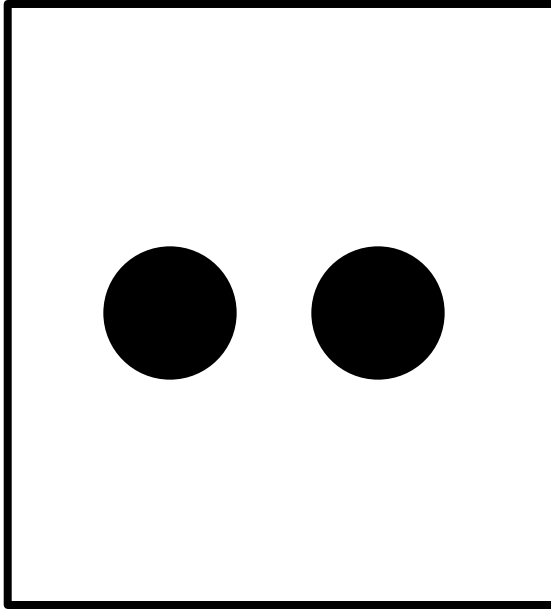
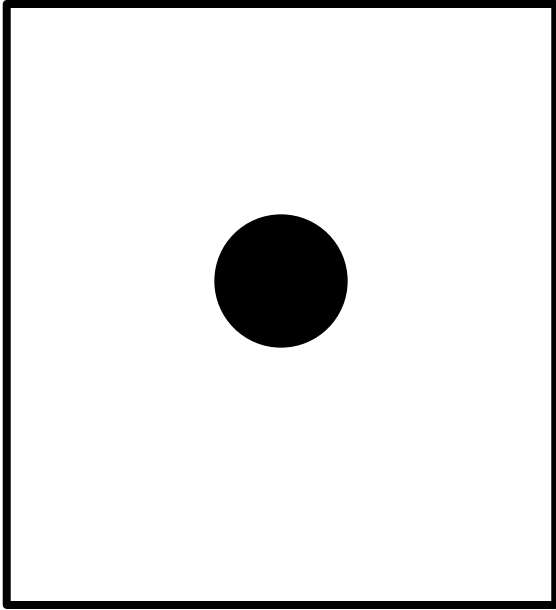
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Match the Dots to the Numbers Activity



Match the Numbers

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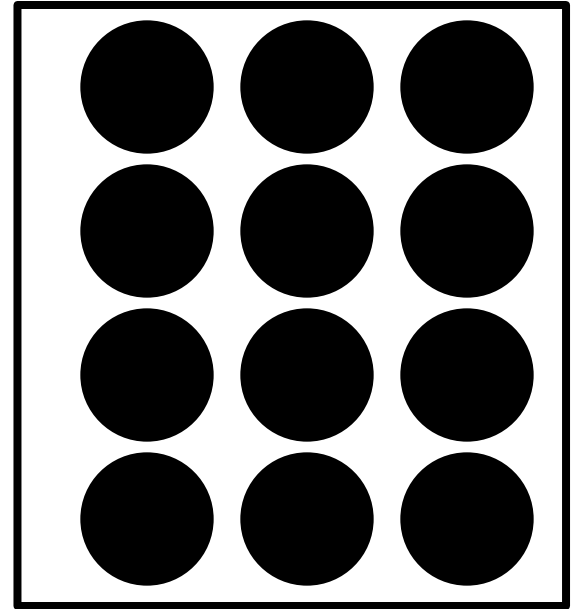
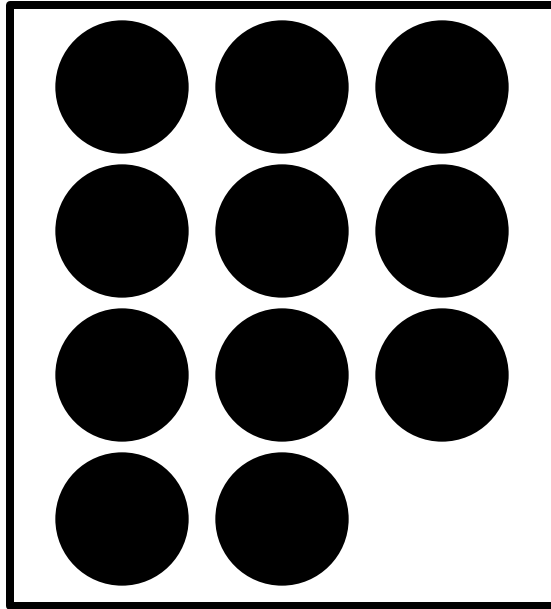
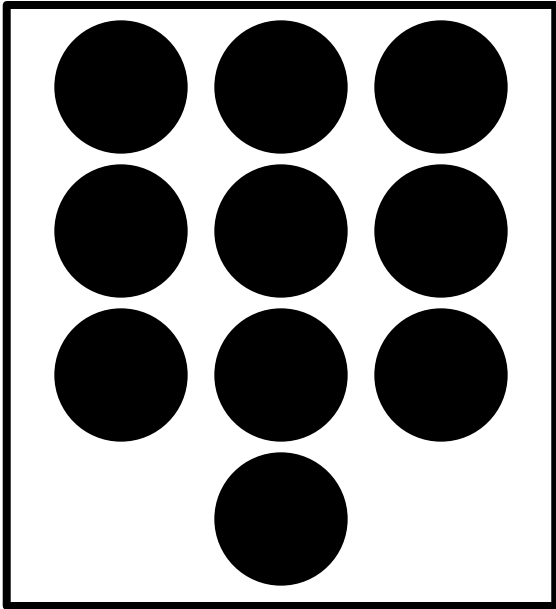
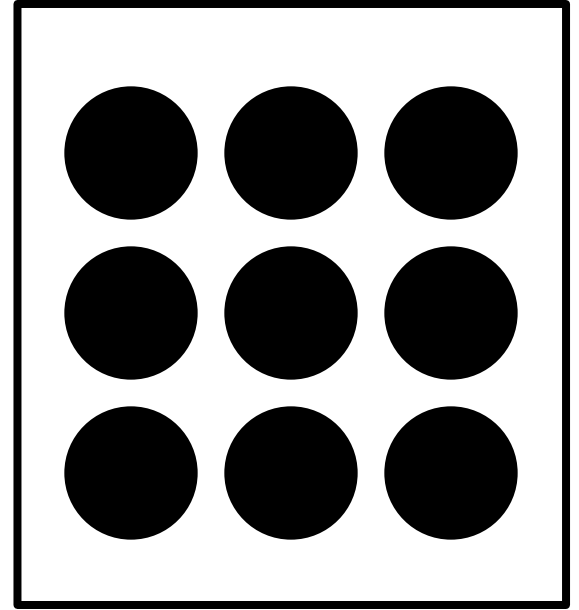
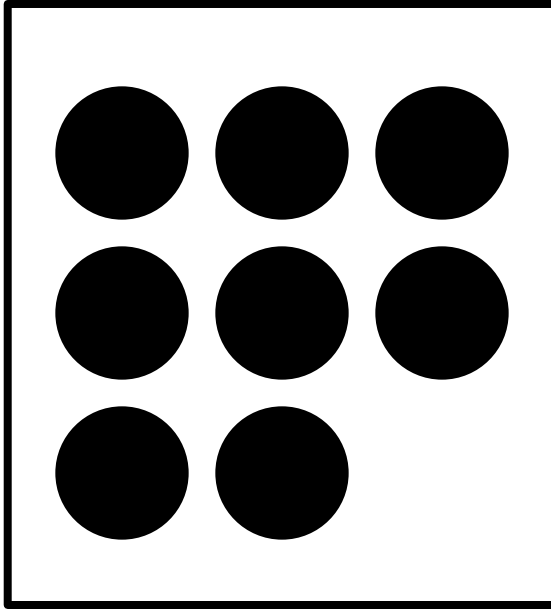
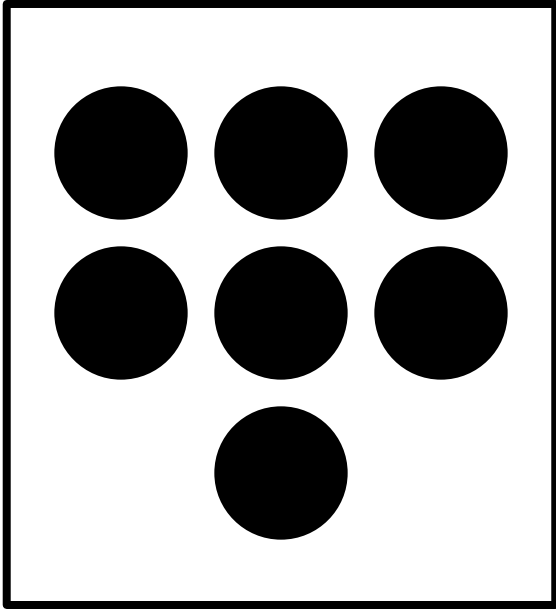
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Match the Dots to the Numbers Activity



Match the Numbers

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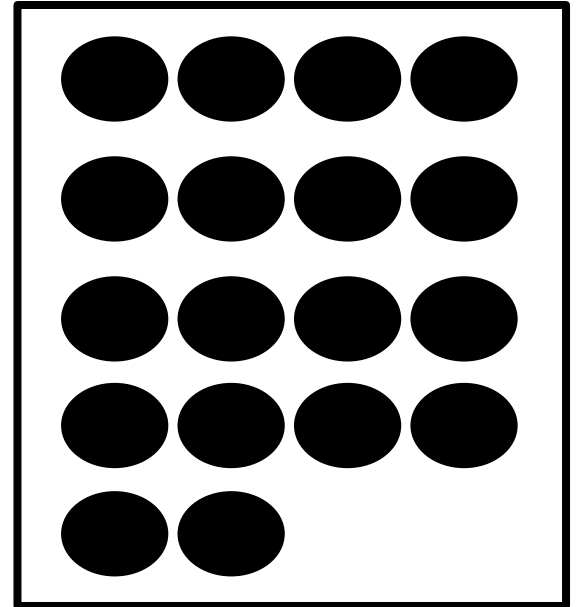
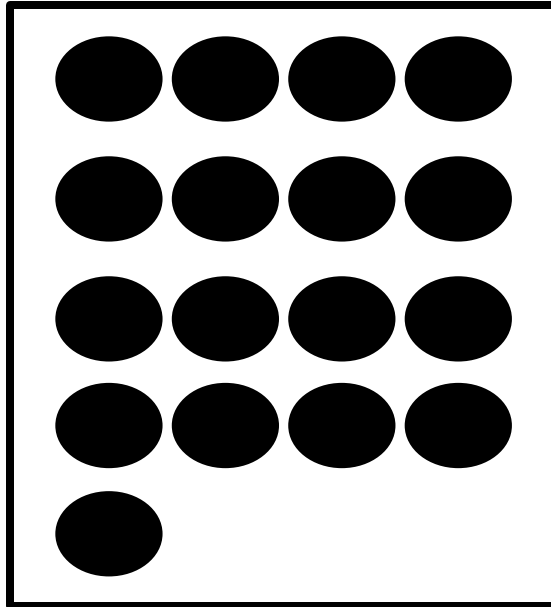
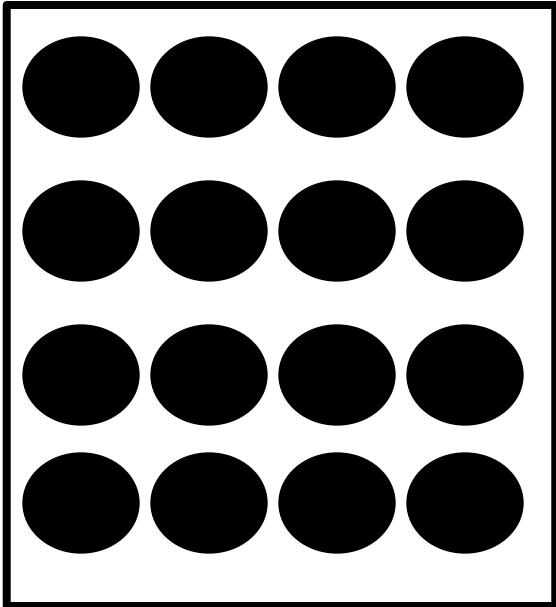
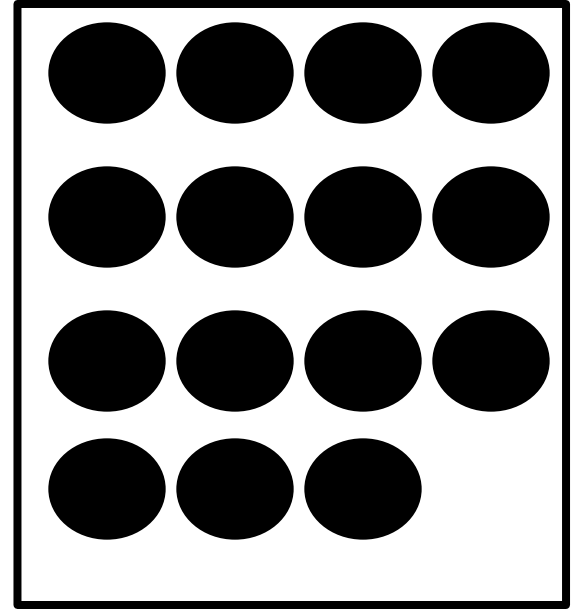
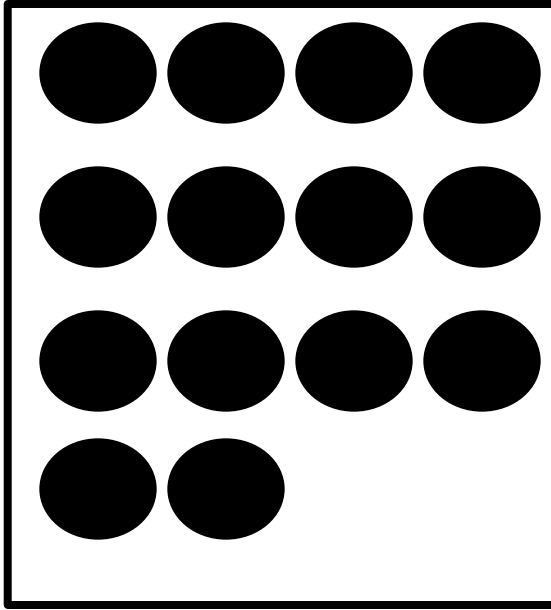
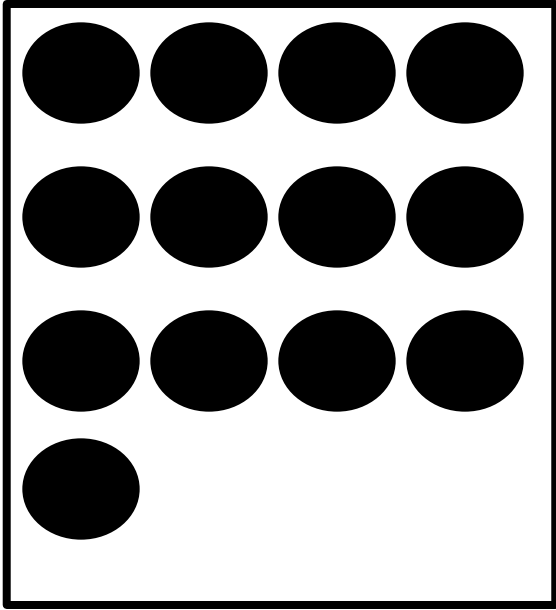
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Match the Dots to the Numbers Activity



Match the Numbers

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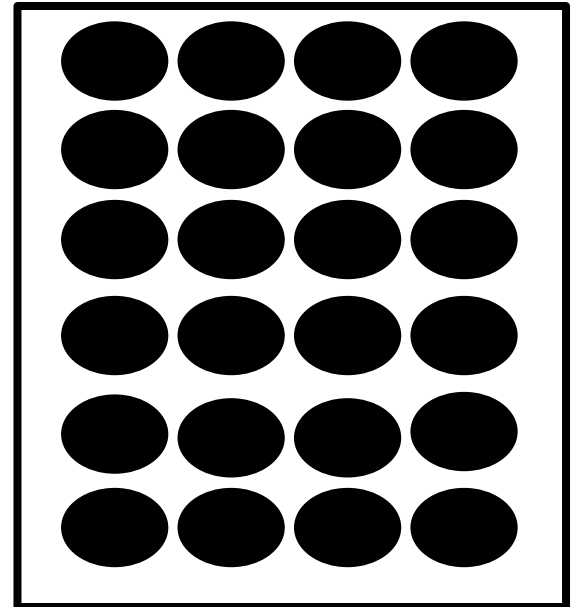
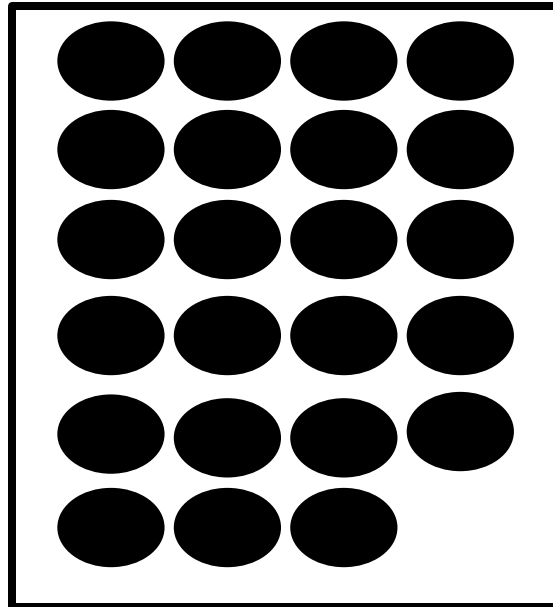
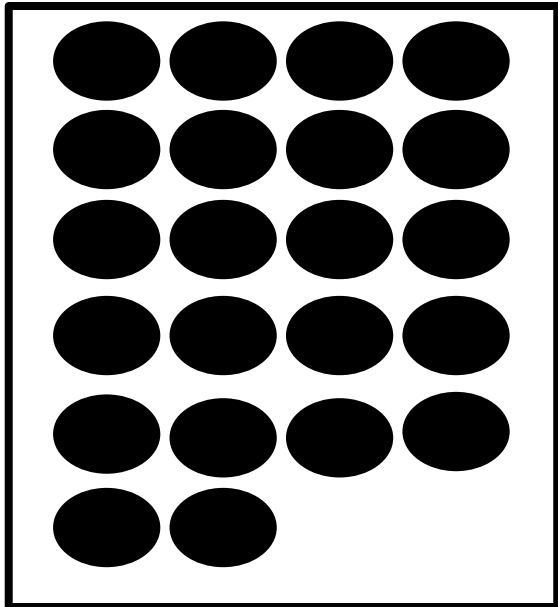
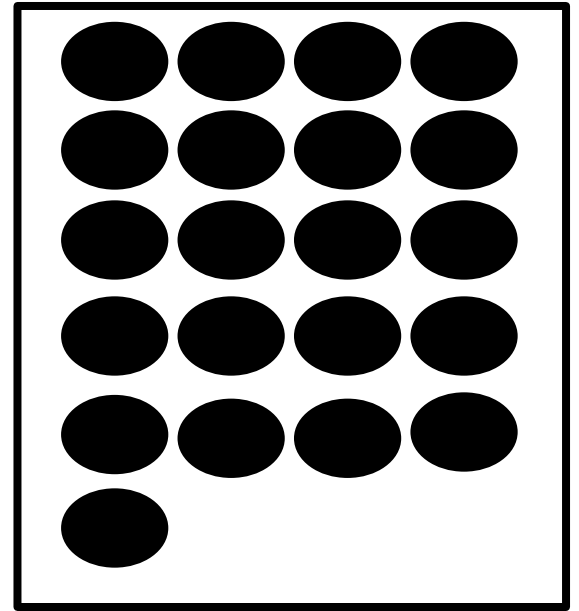
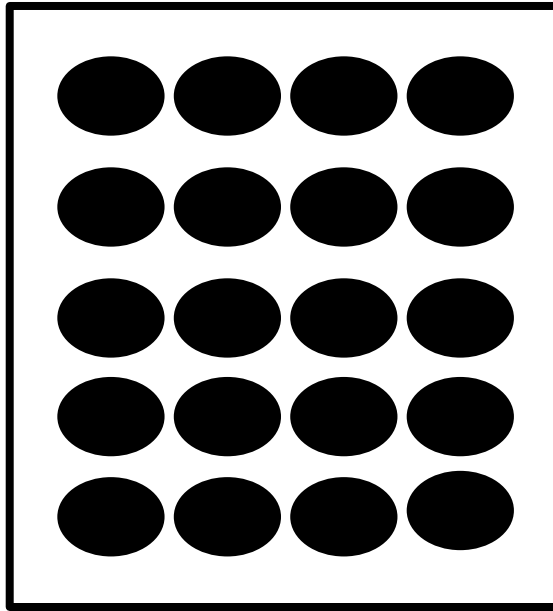
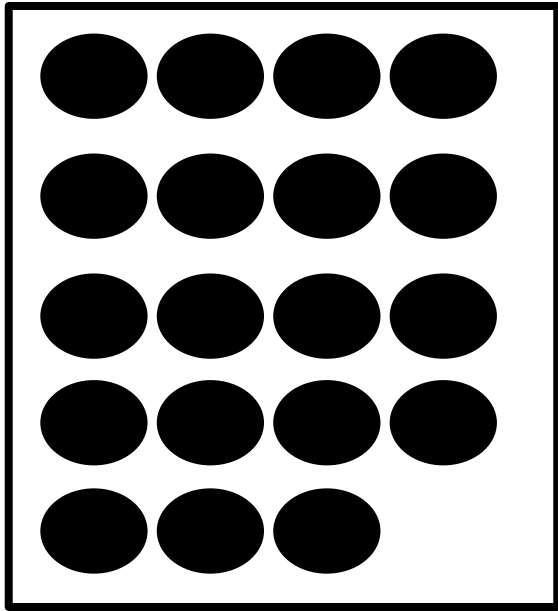
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24

Match the Dots to the Numbers Activity



Match the Numbers

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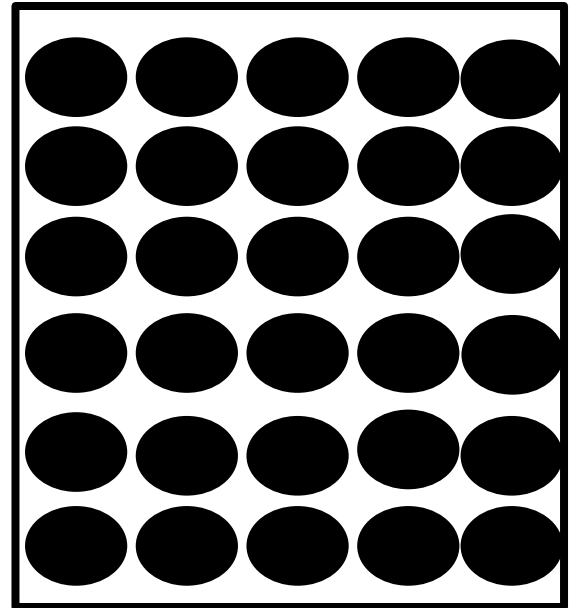
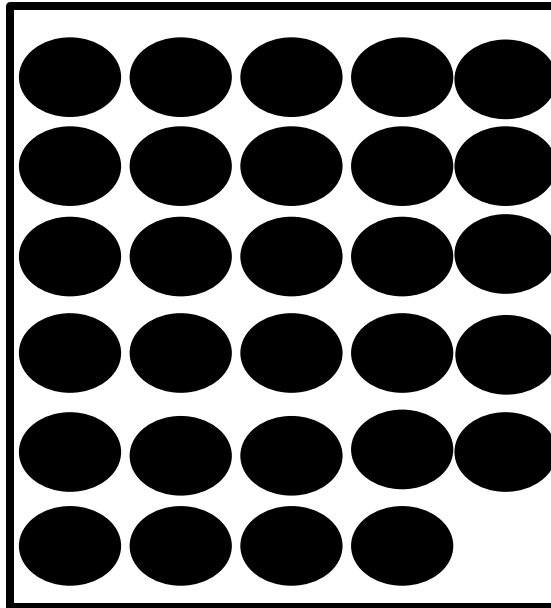
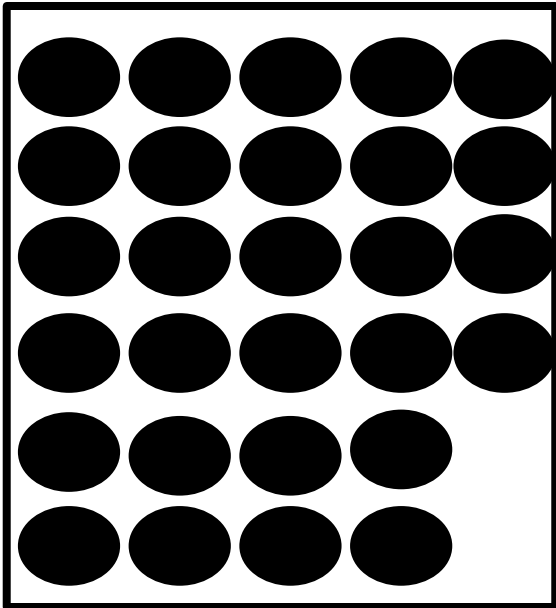
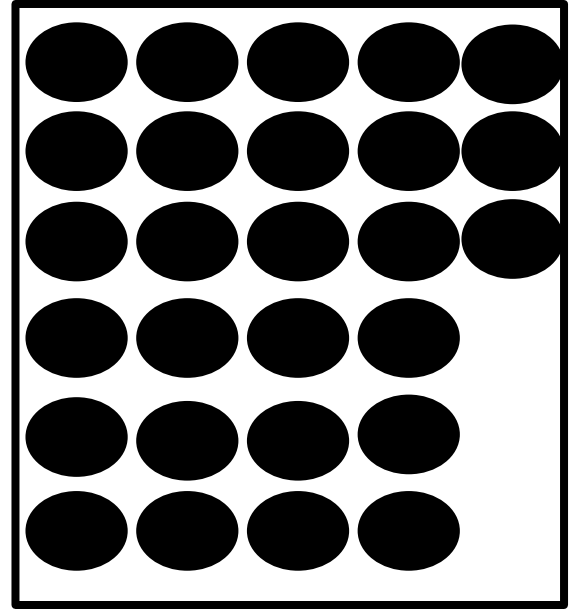
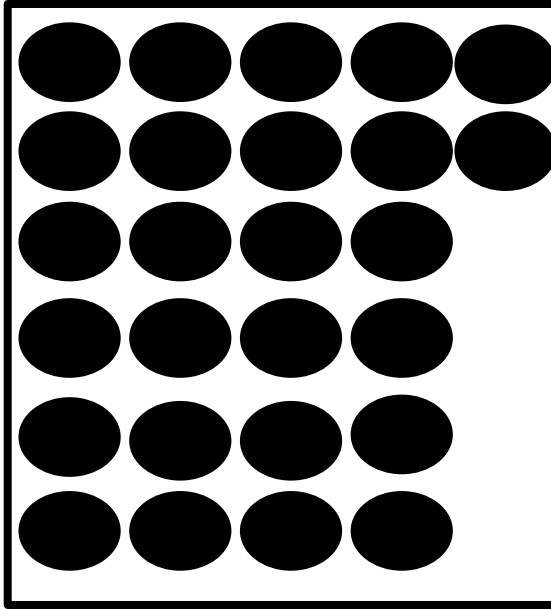
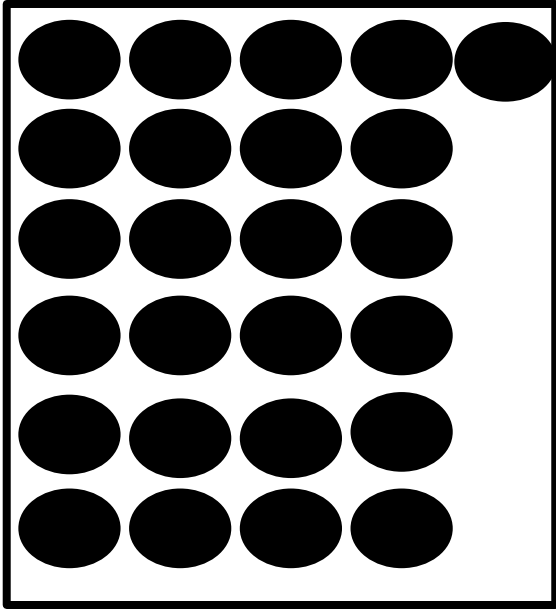
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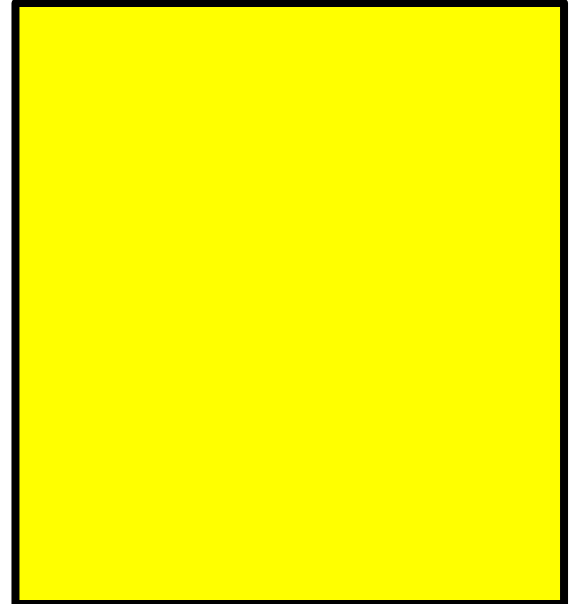
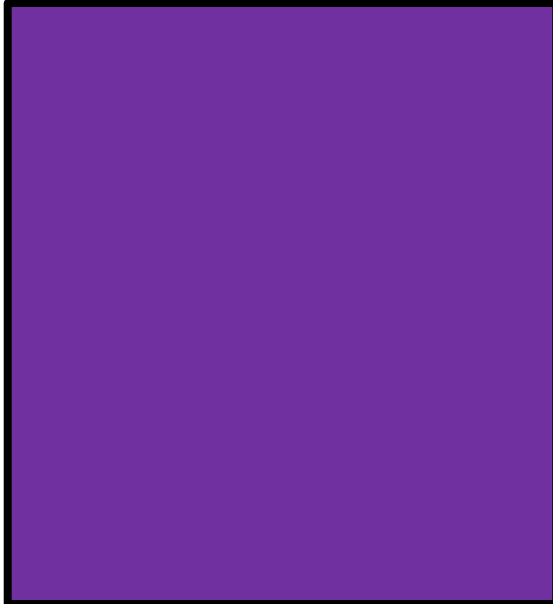
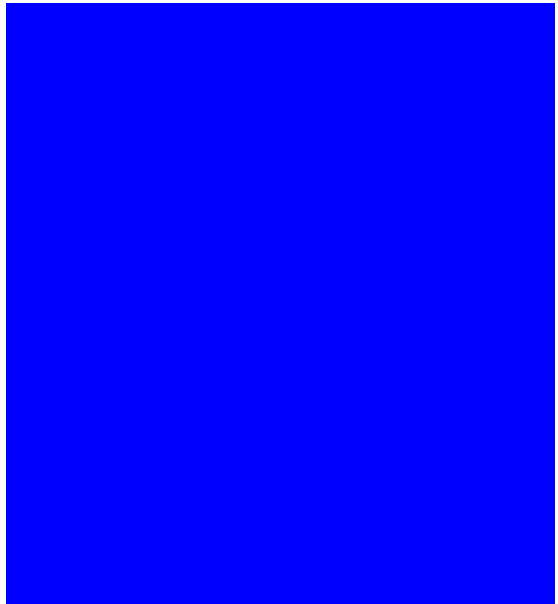
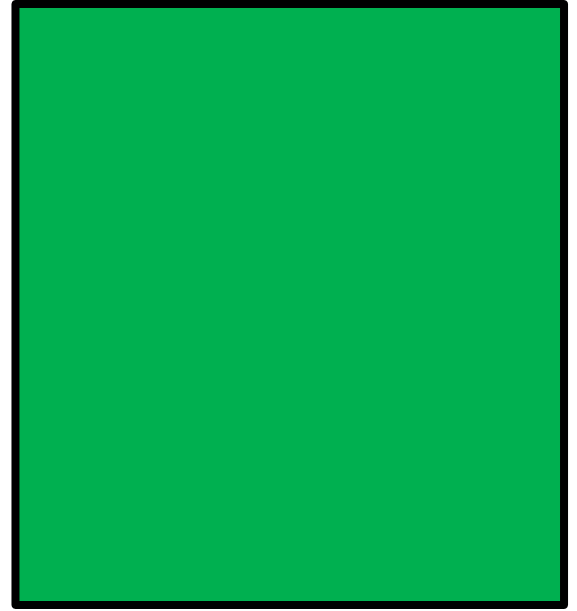
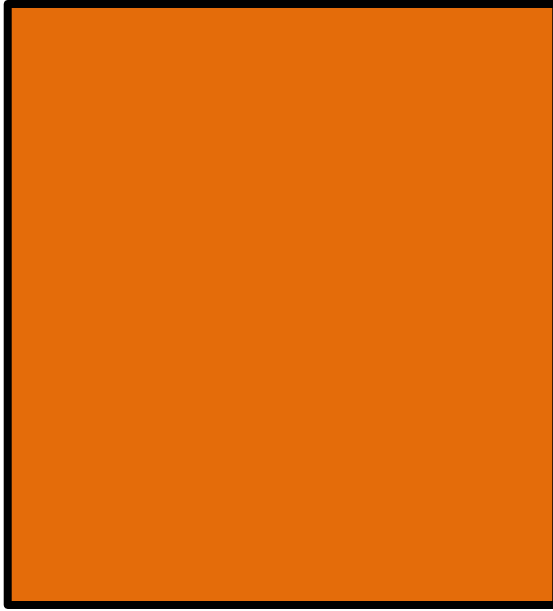
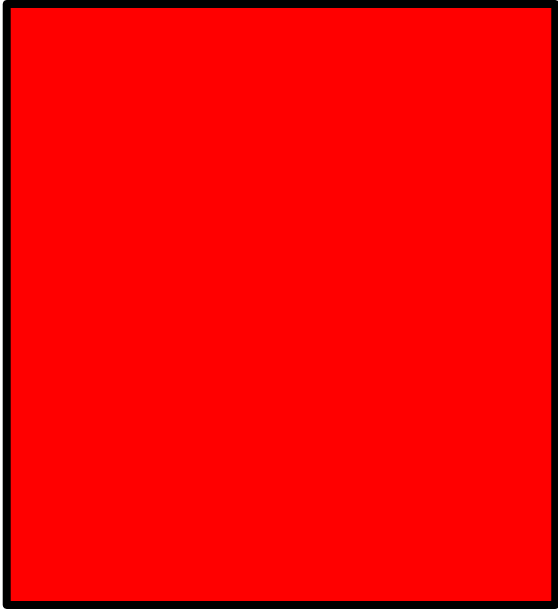
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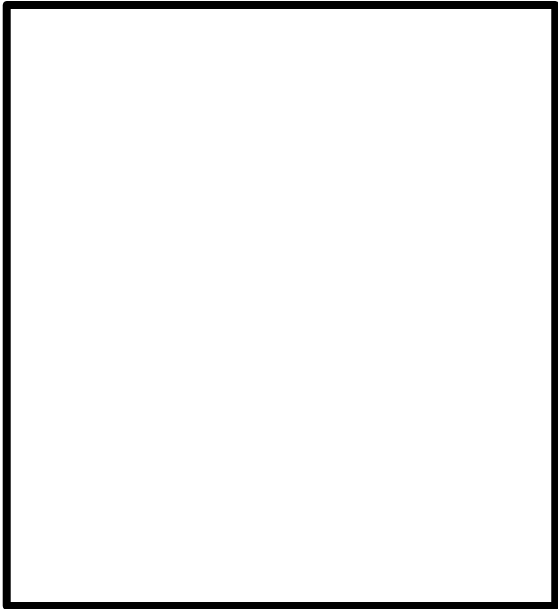
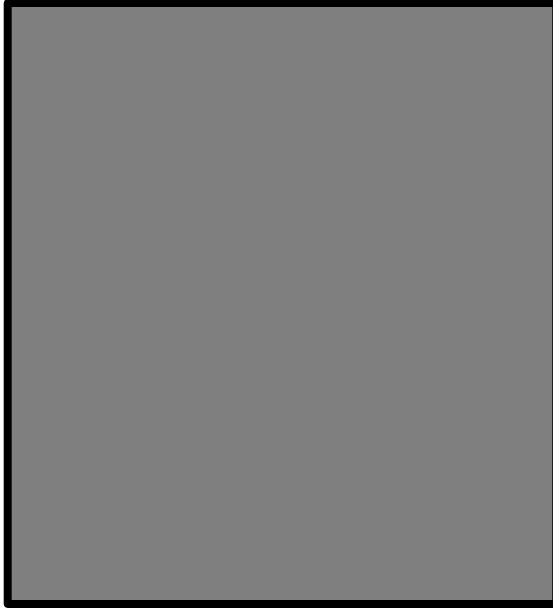
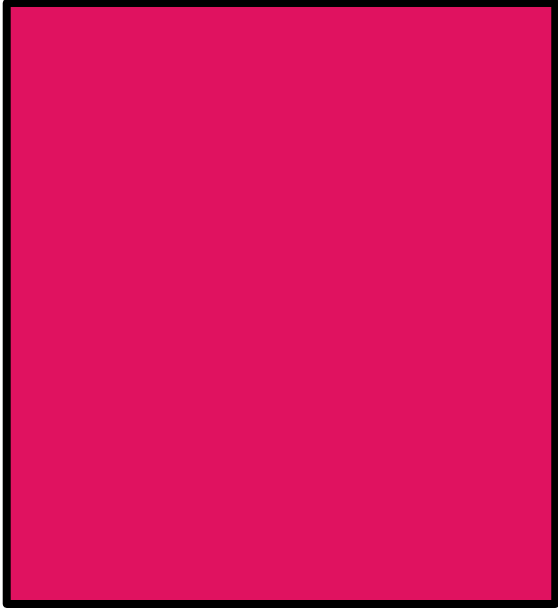
Match the Dots to the Numbers Activity



Match the Colors (without color words)



Match the Colors (without color words)



Match the Colors (with color words)



red



orange



green



blue



purple



yellow

Match the Colors (with color words)

A solid pink square with a black border.

pink

A solid gray square with a black border.

gray

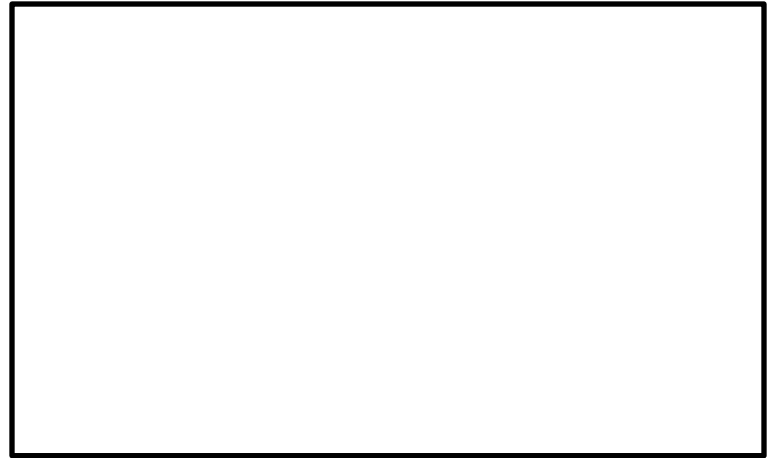
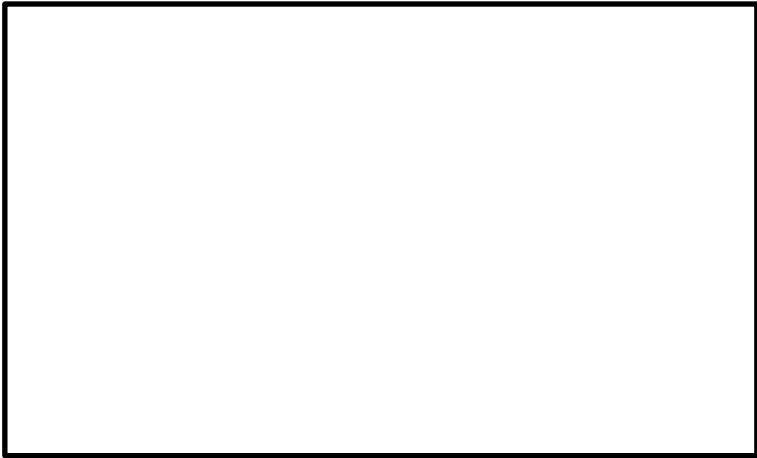
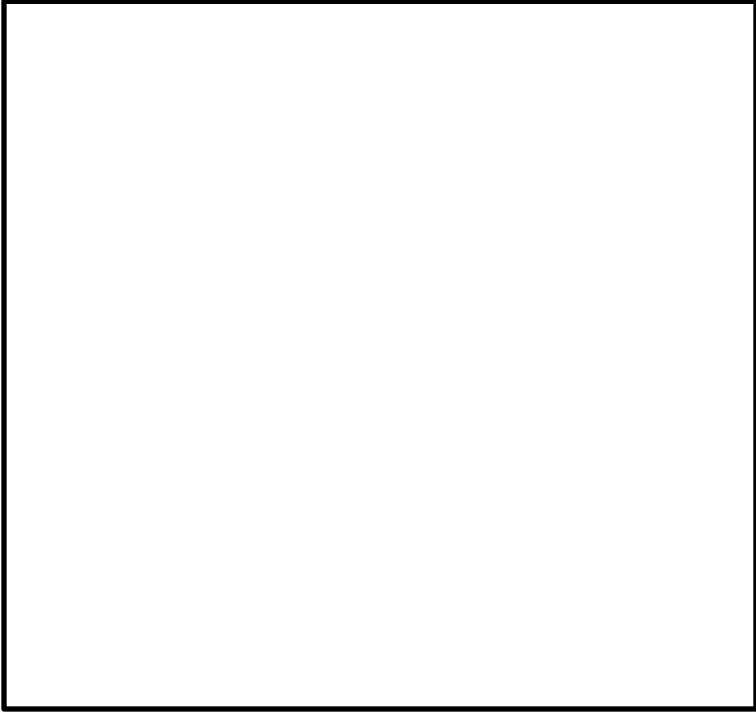
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black

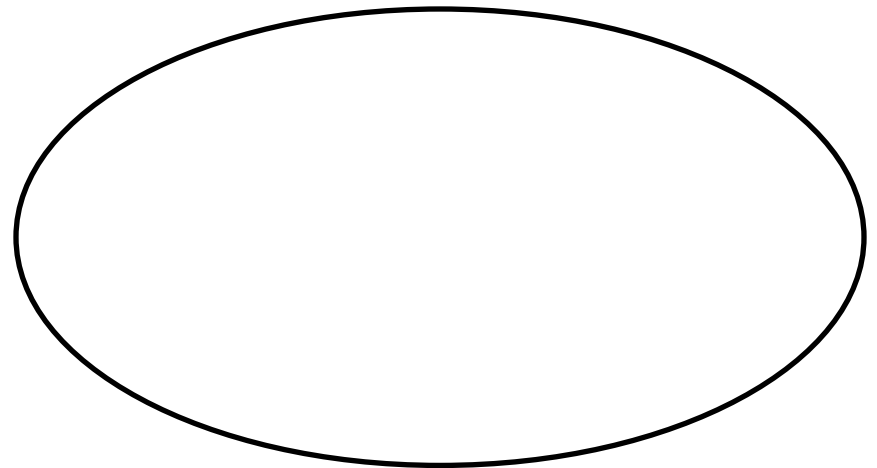
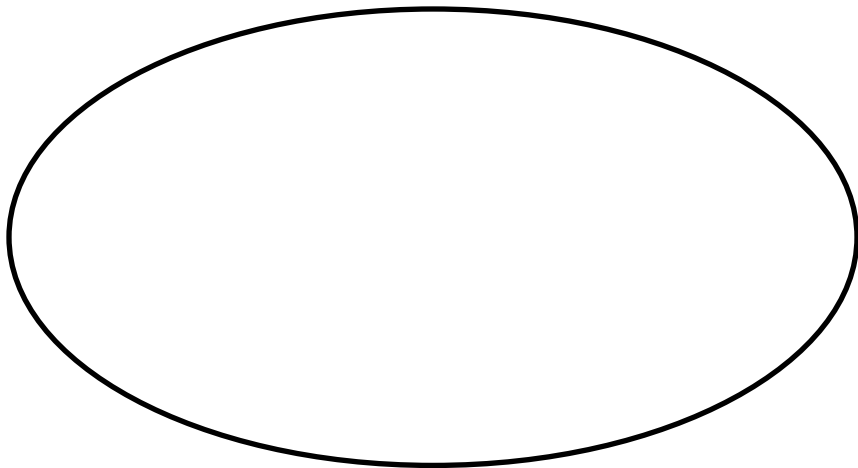
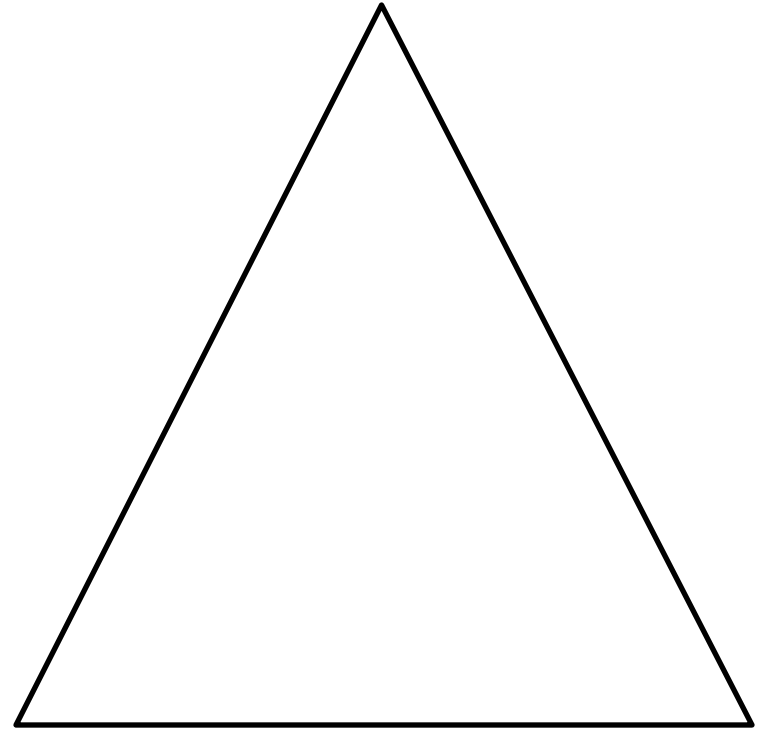
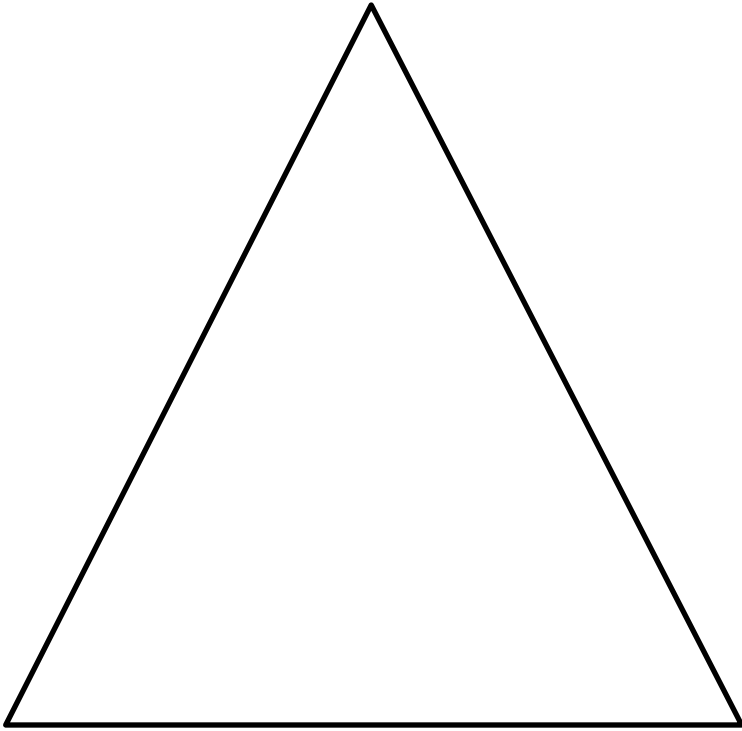
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white

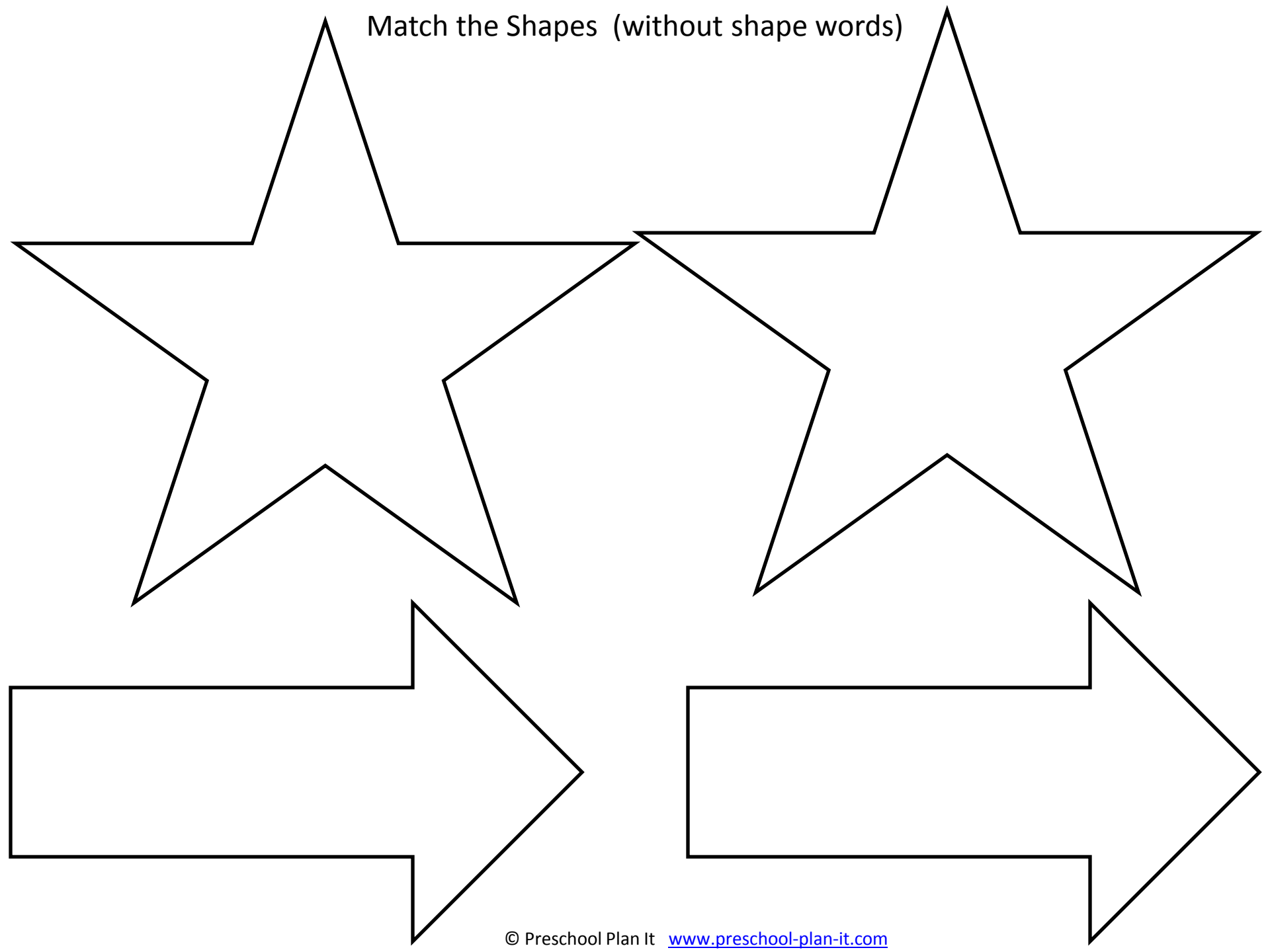
Match the Shapes (without shape words)



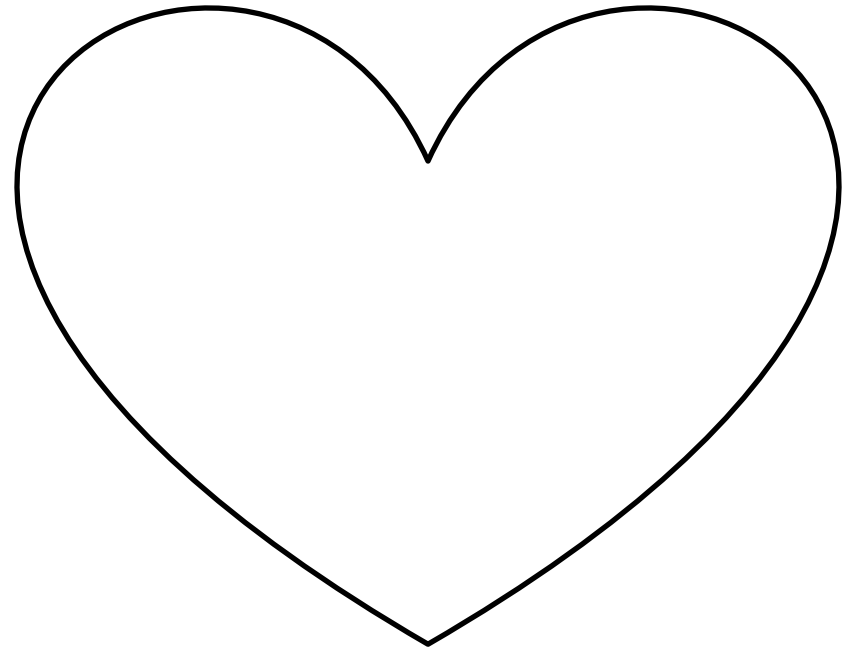
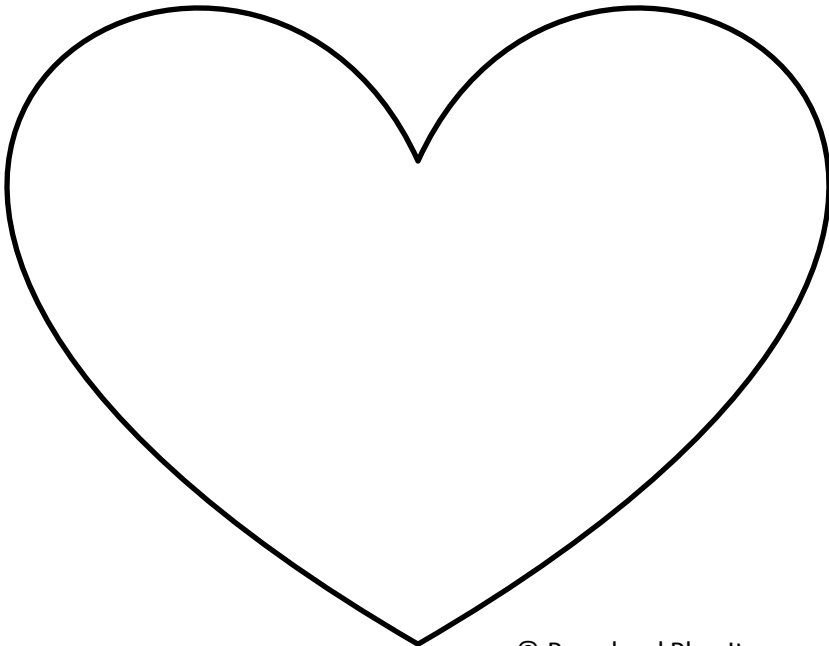
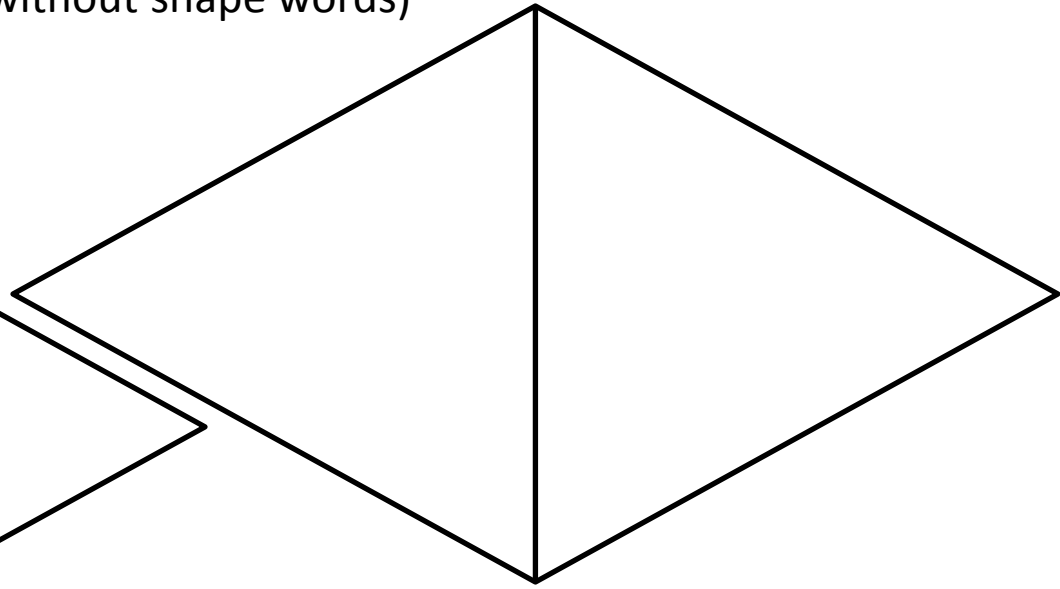
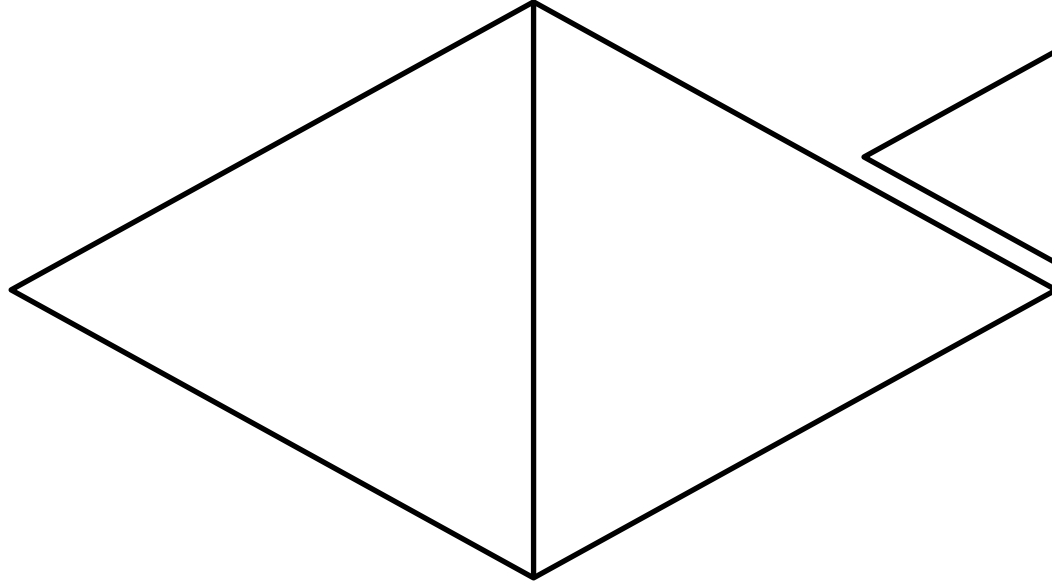
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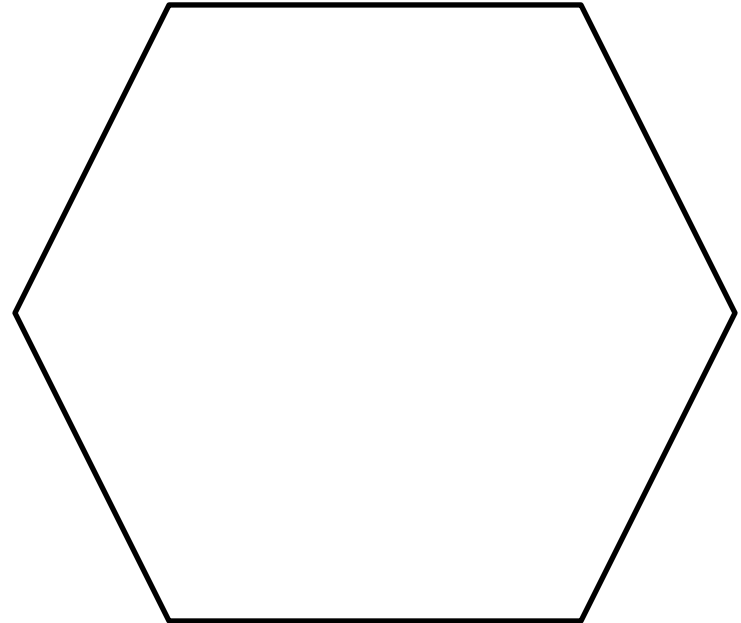
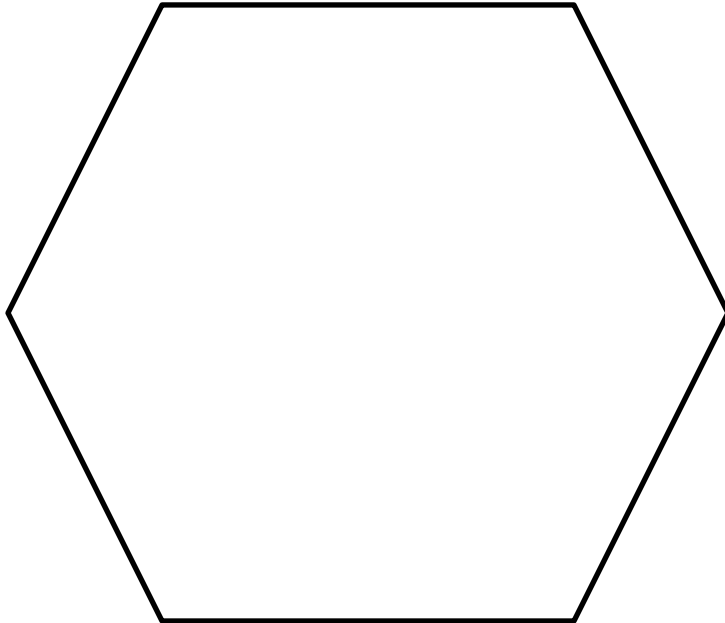
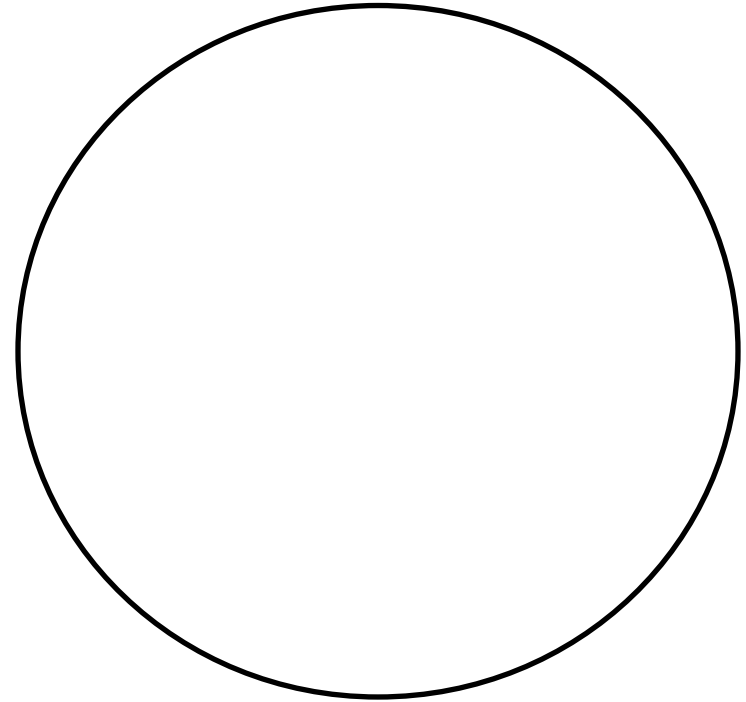
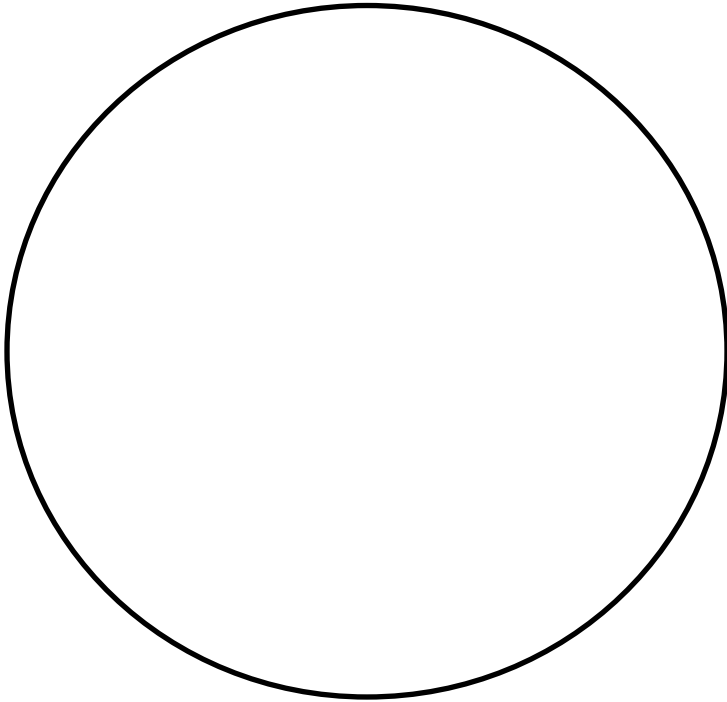
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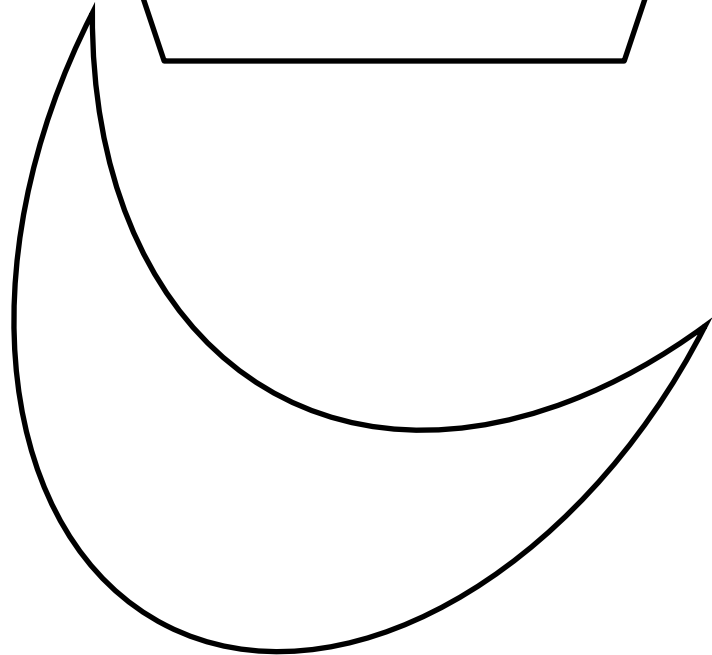
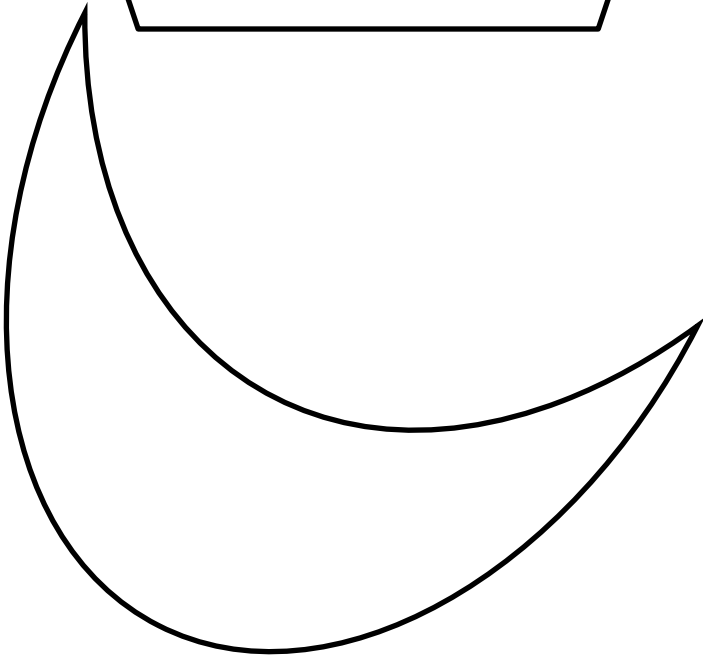
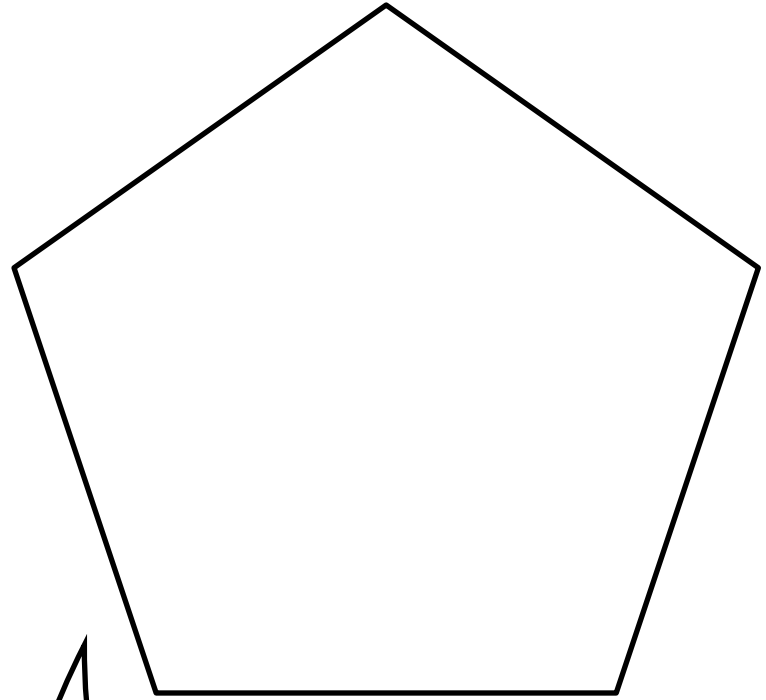
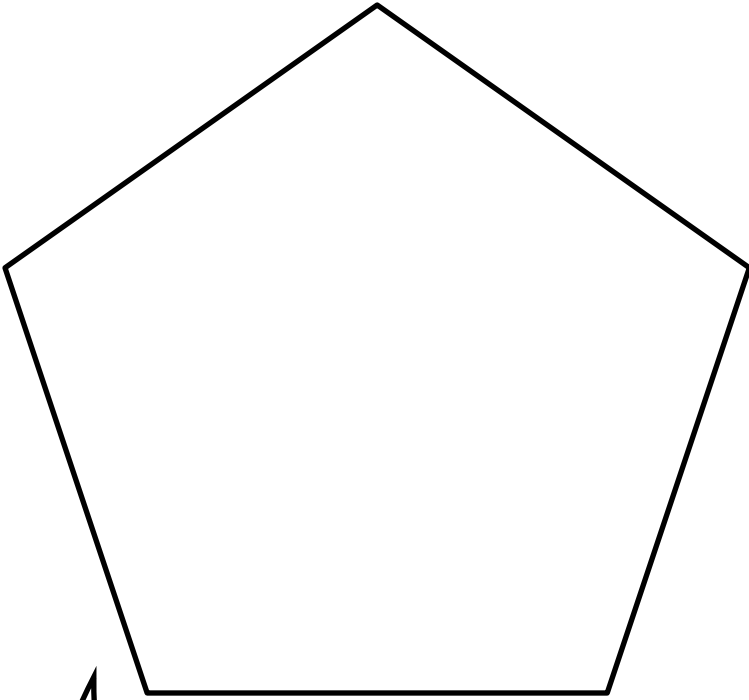
Match the Shapes (without shape words)



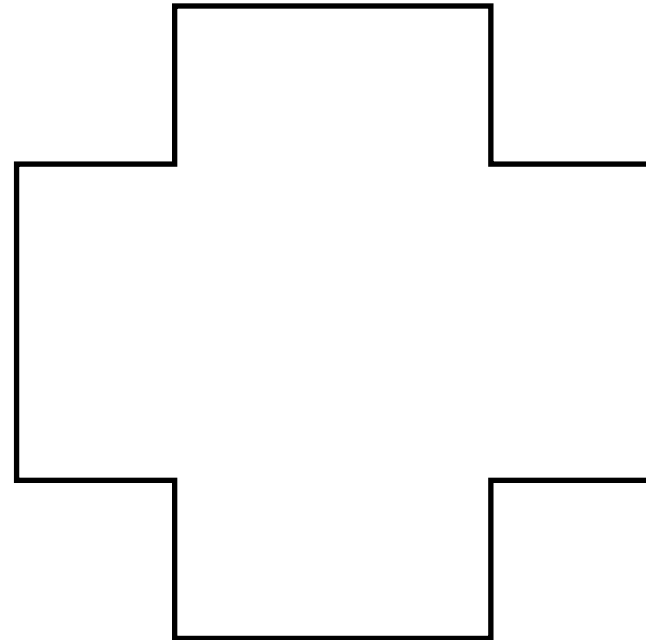
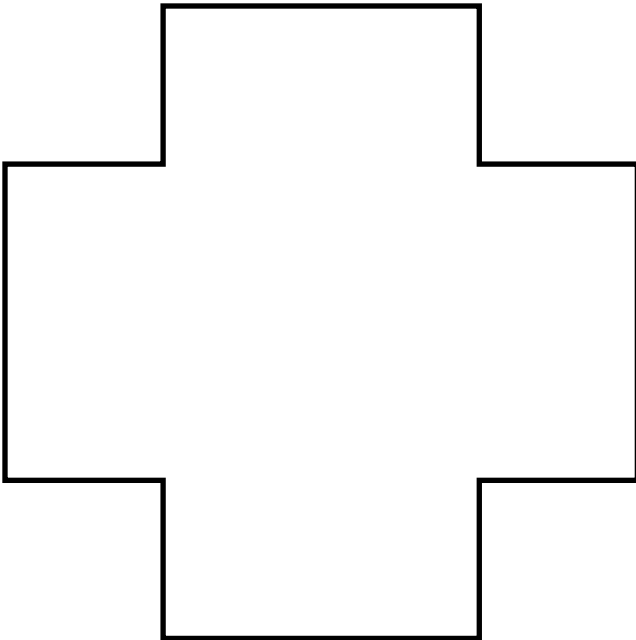
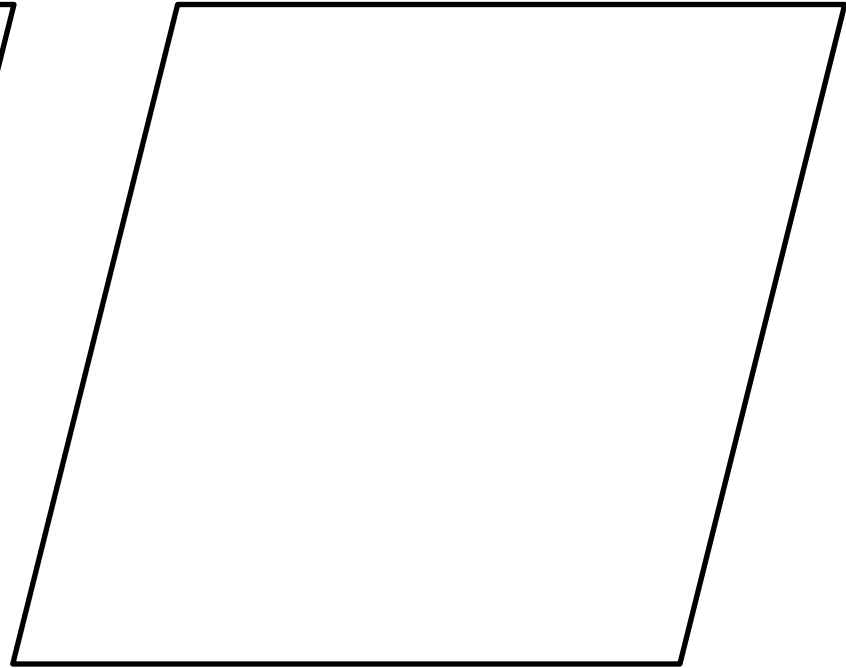
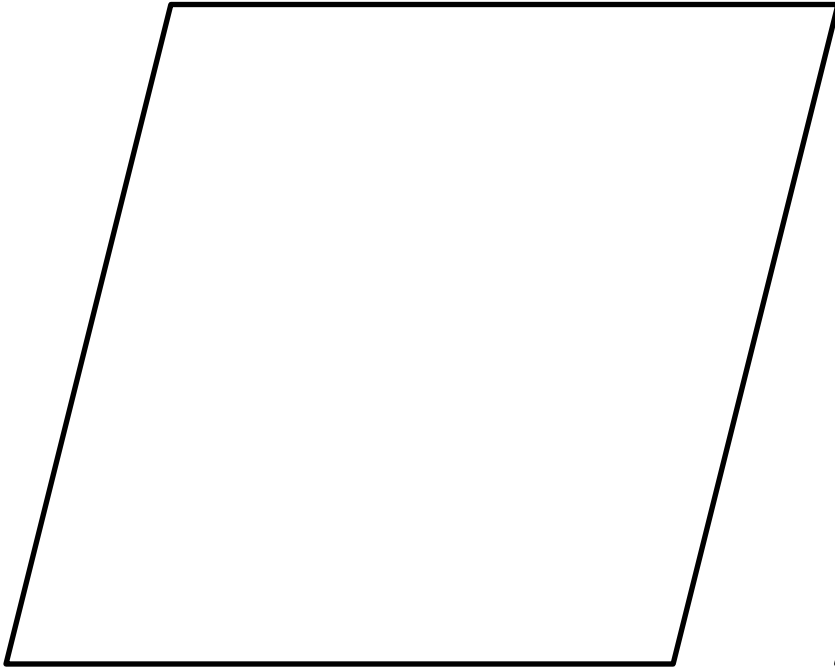
Match the Shapes (without shape words)



Match the Shapes (without shape words)



Match the Shapes (without shape words)



Match the Shapes (with shape words)



square



square

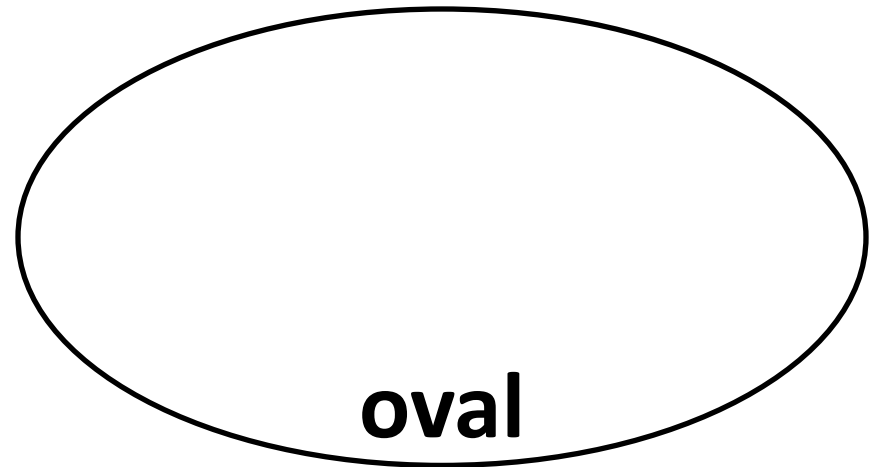
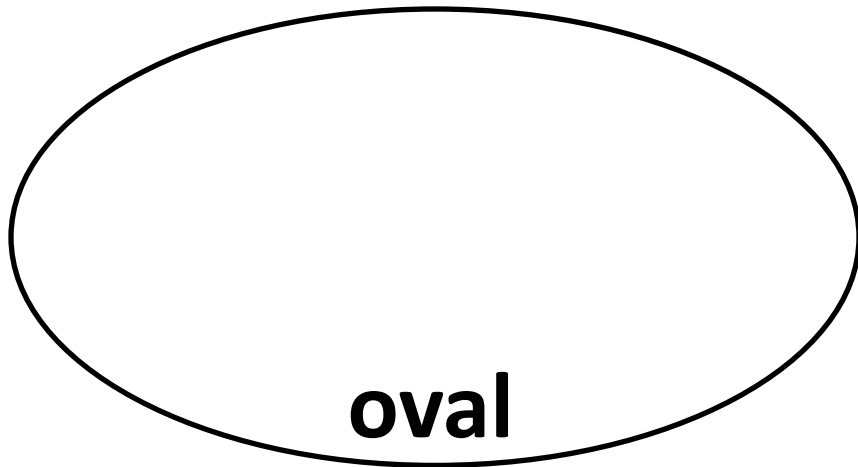
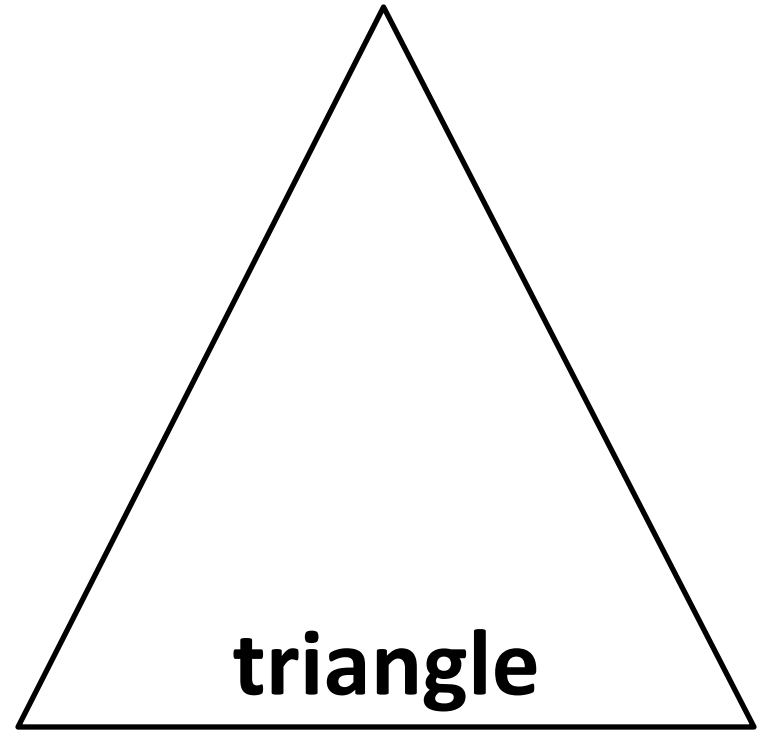
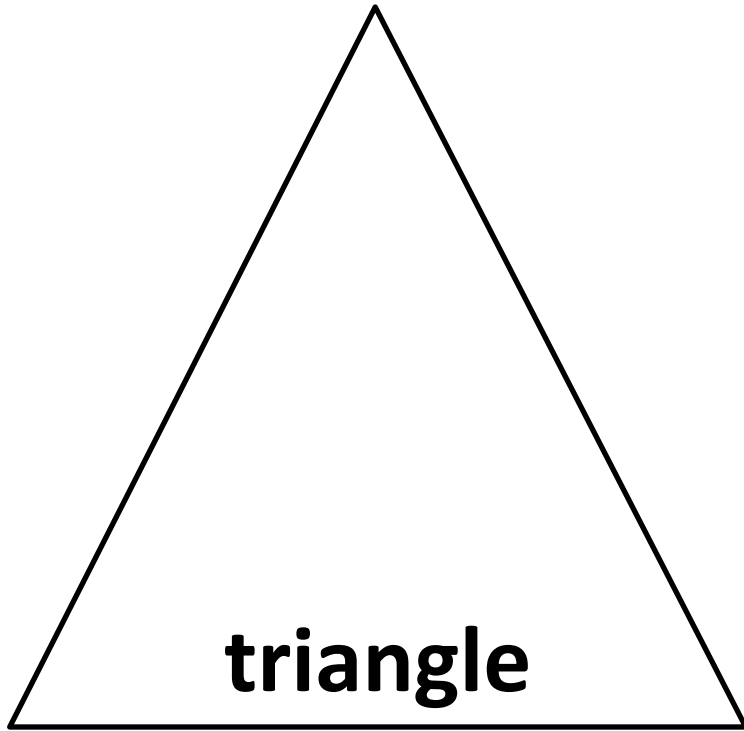


rectangle



rectangle

Match the Shapes (with shape words)



Match the Shapes (with shape words)



star



star



arrow



arrow

Match the Shapes (with shape words)



diamond



diamond



heart



heart

Match the Shapes (with shape words)



circle



circle

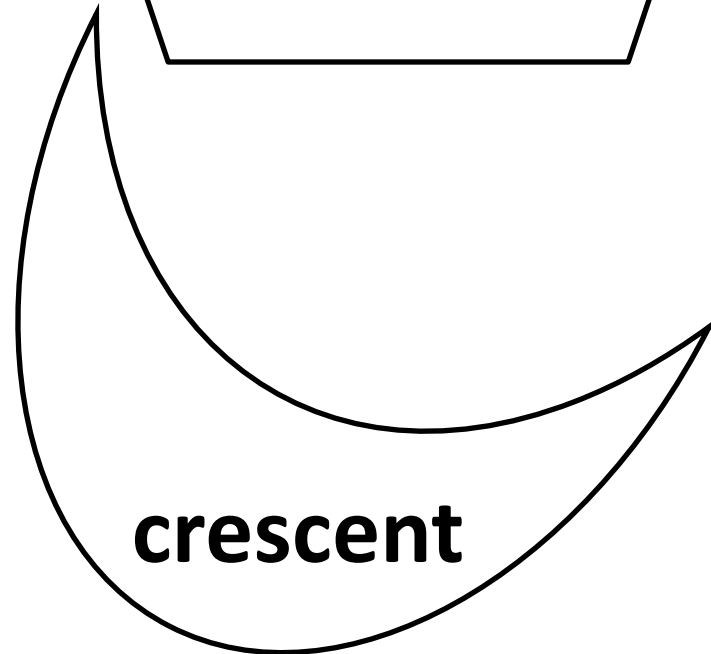
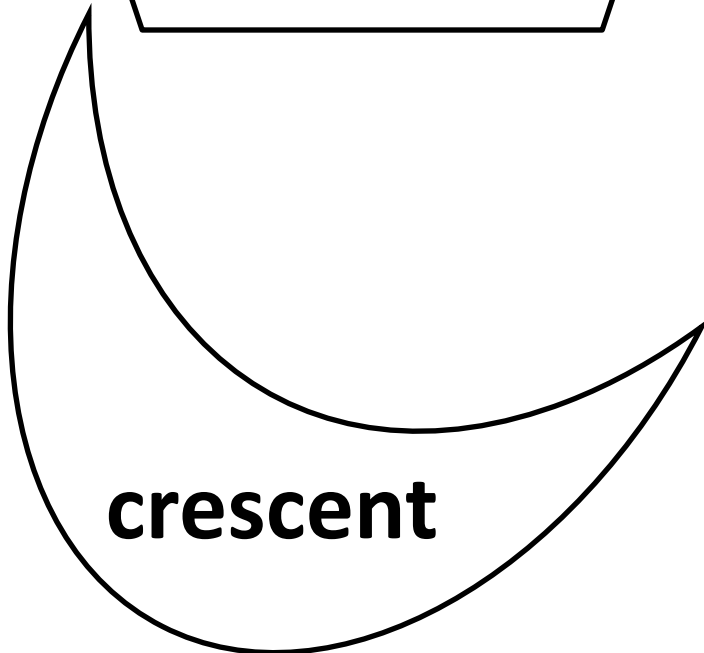
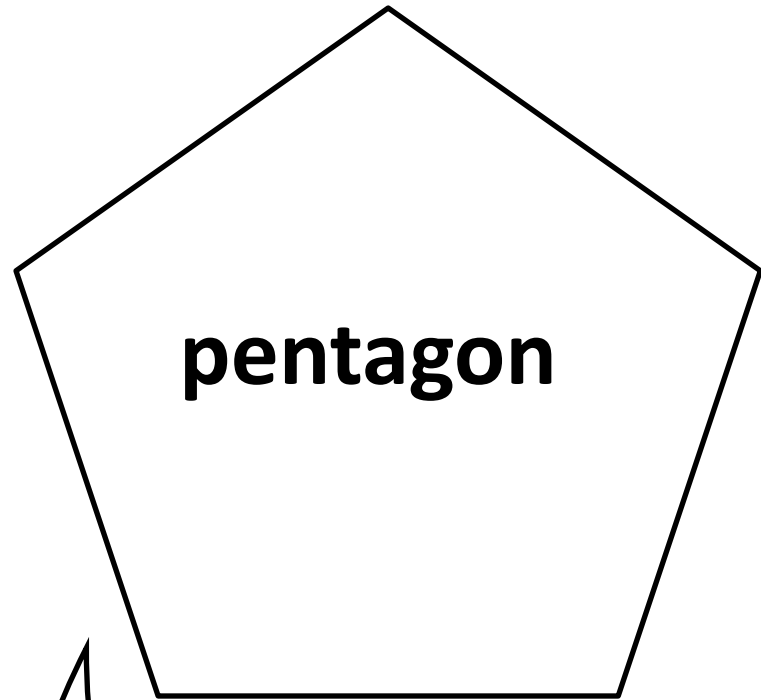
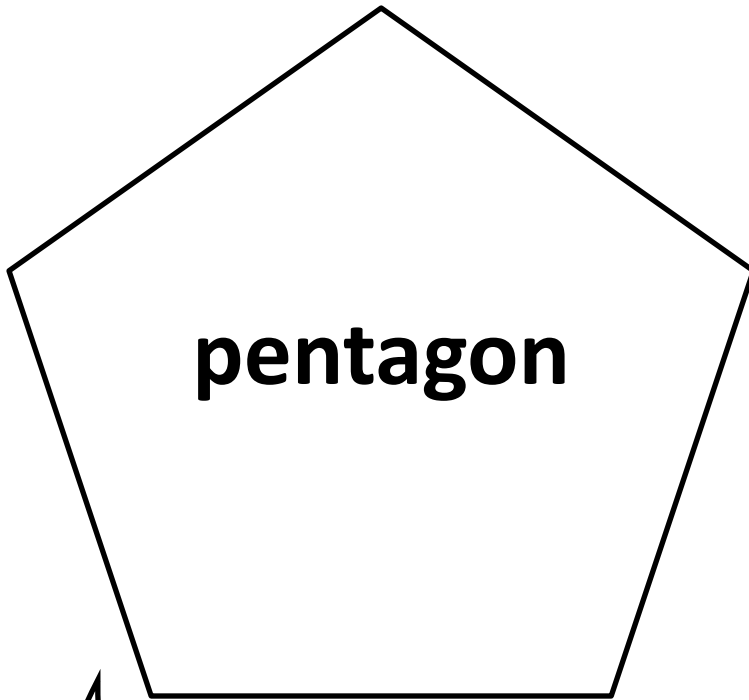


hexagon

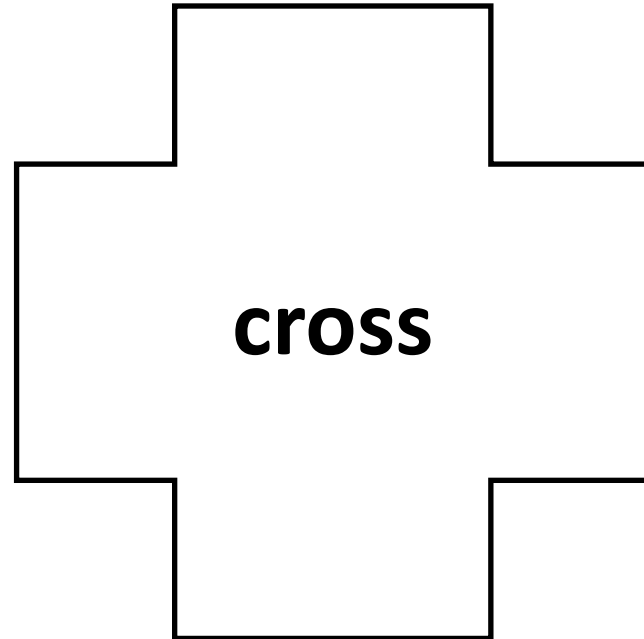
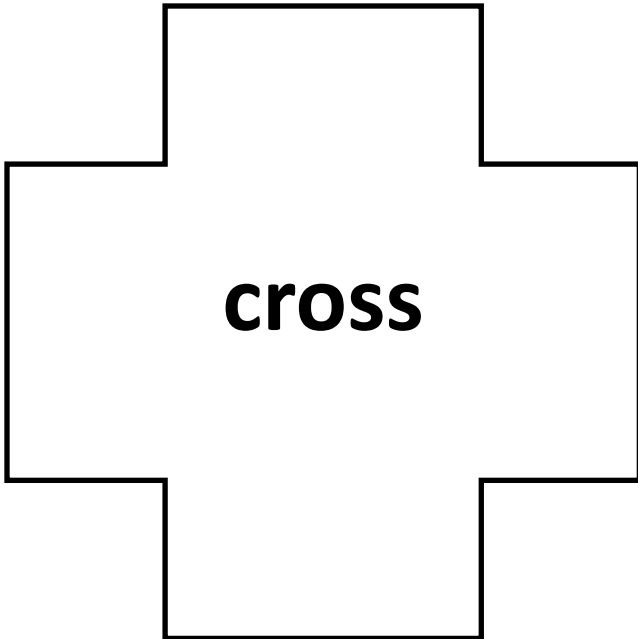
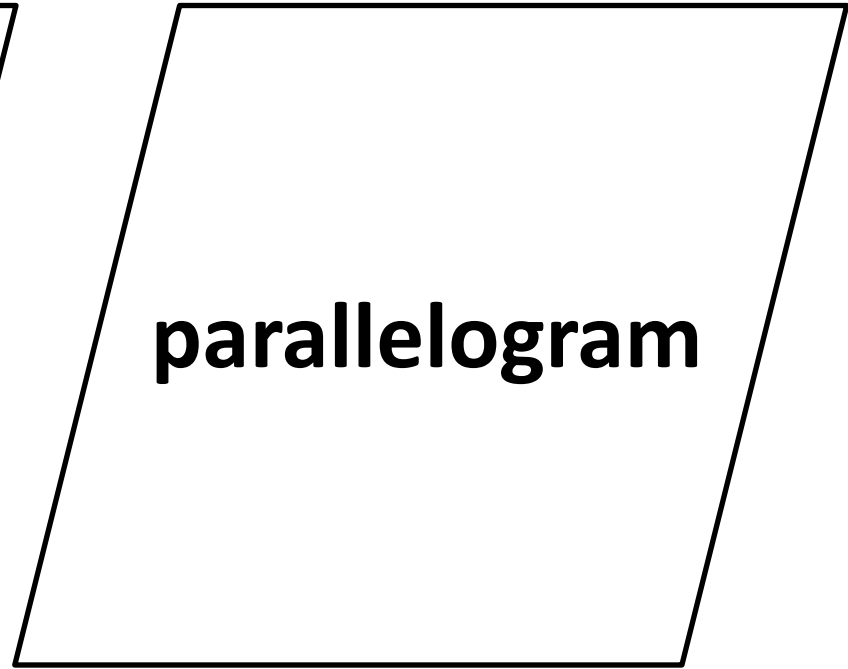
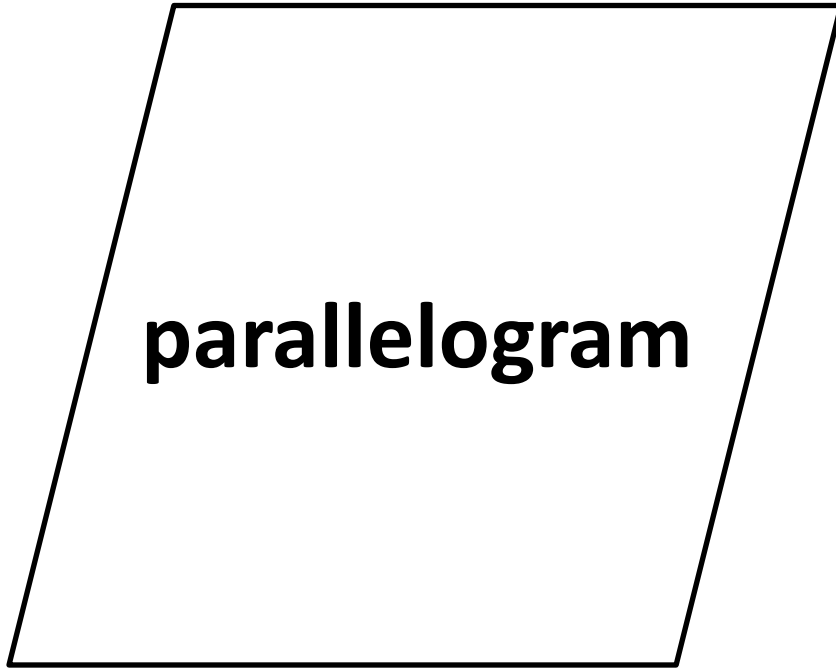


hexagon

Match the Shapes (with shape words)



Match the Shapes (with shape words)



Match the Letters-Upper Case

A

B

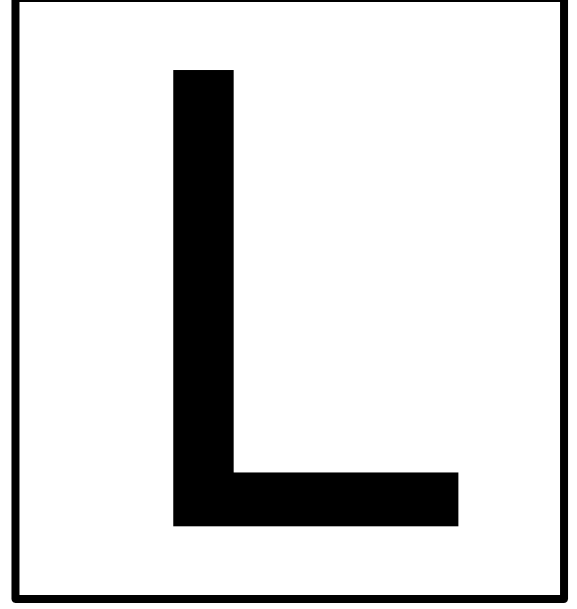
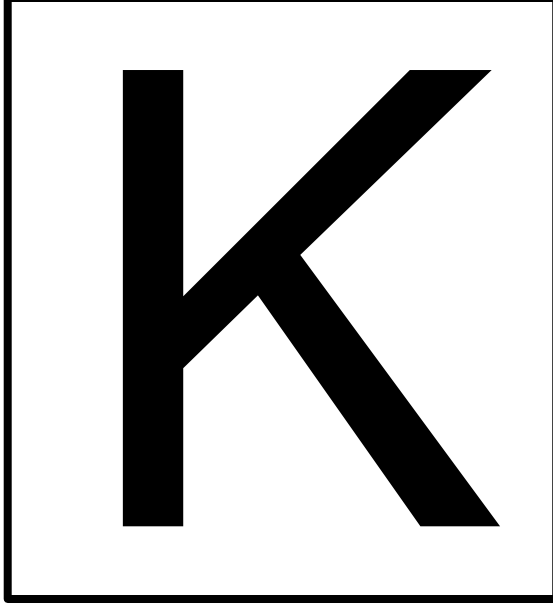
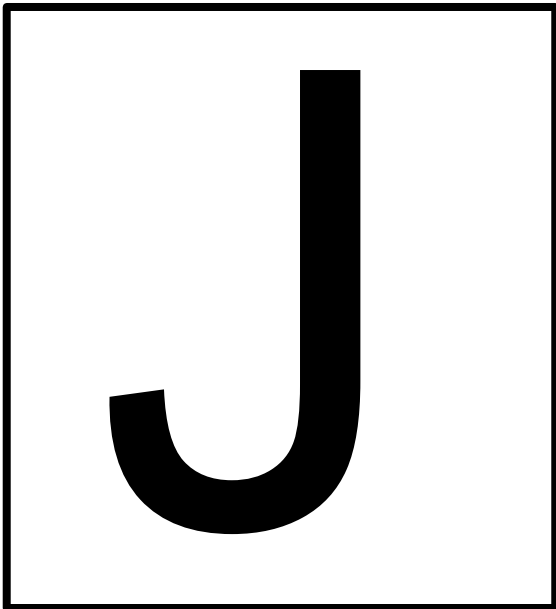
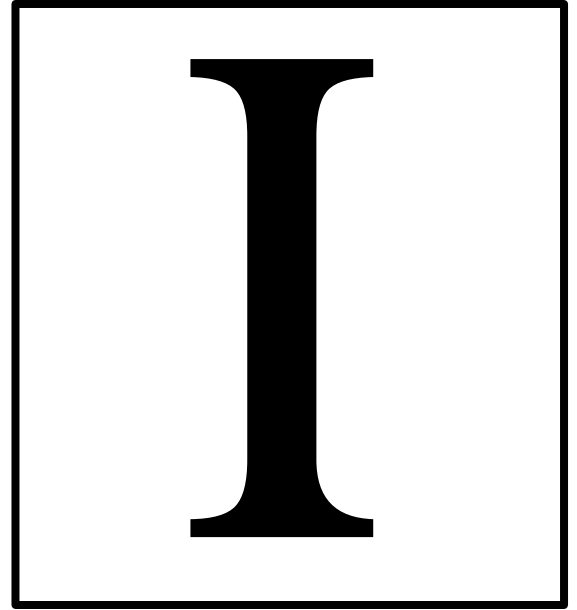
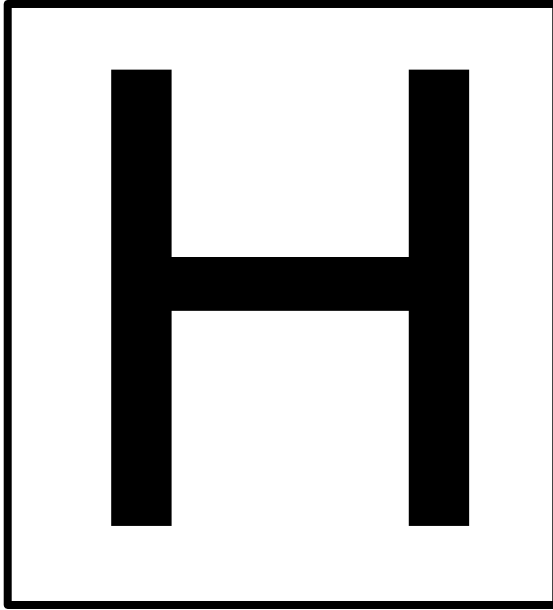
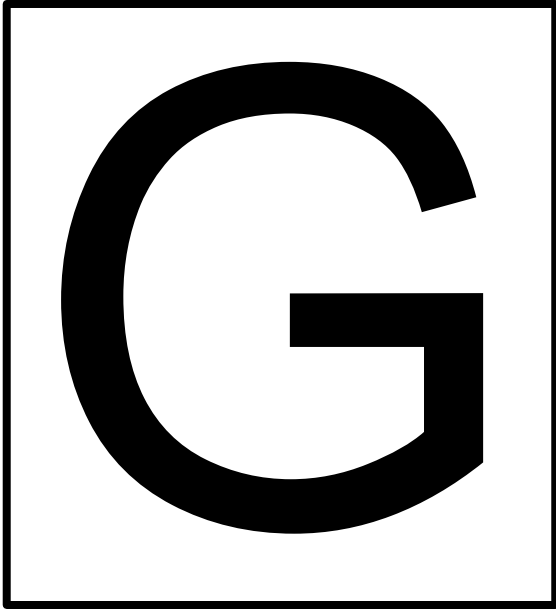
C

D

E

F

Match the Letters-Upper Case



Match the Letters-Upper Case

M

N

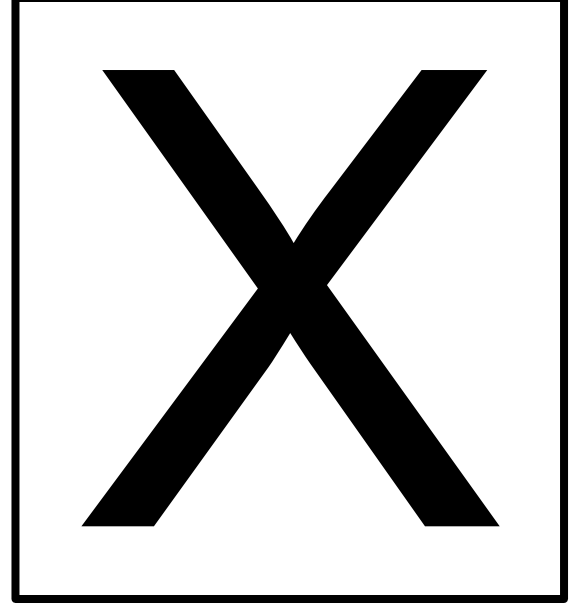
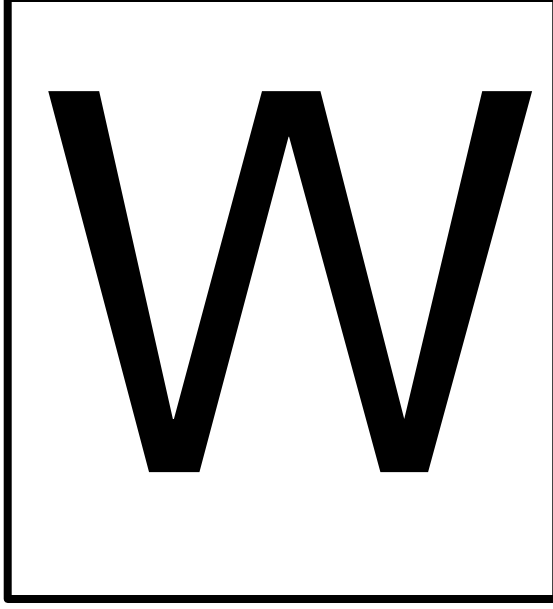
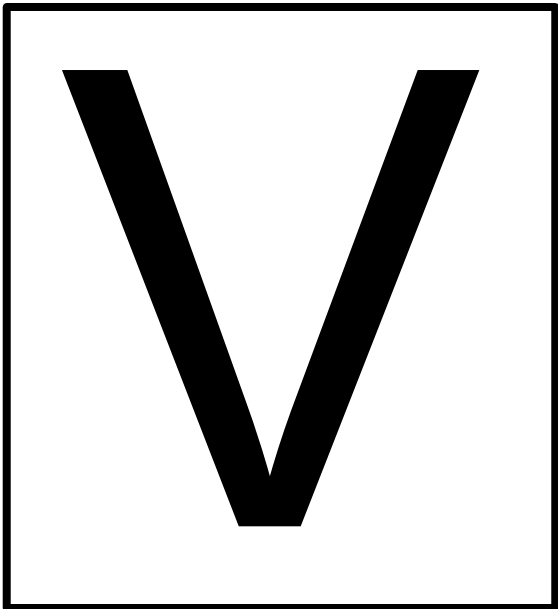
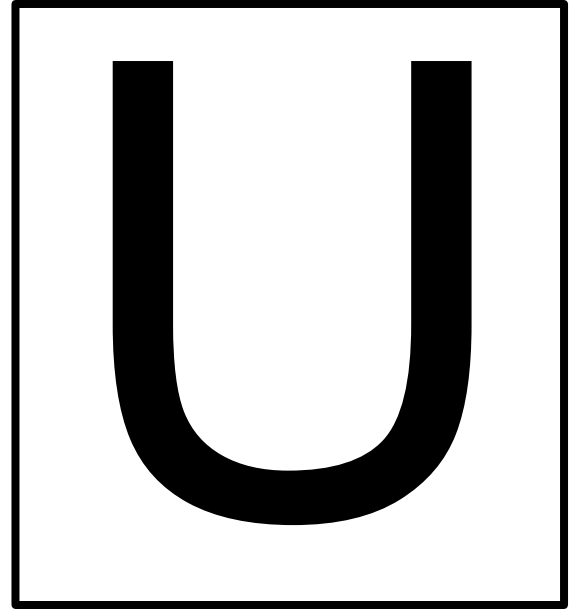
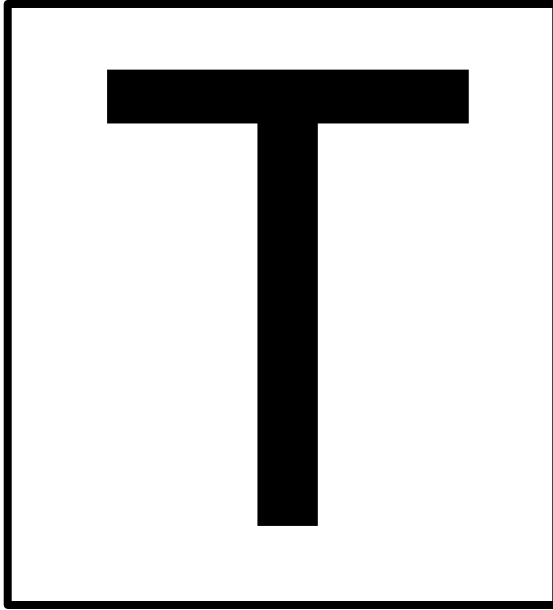
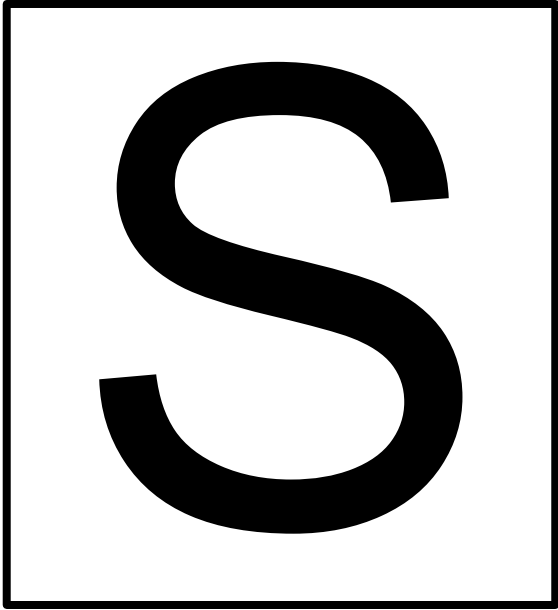
O

P

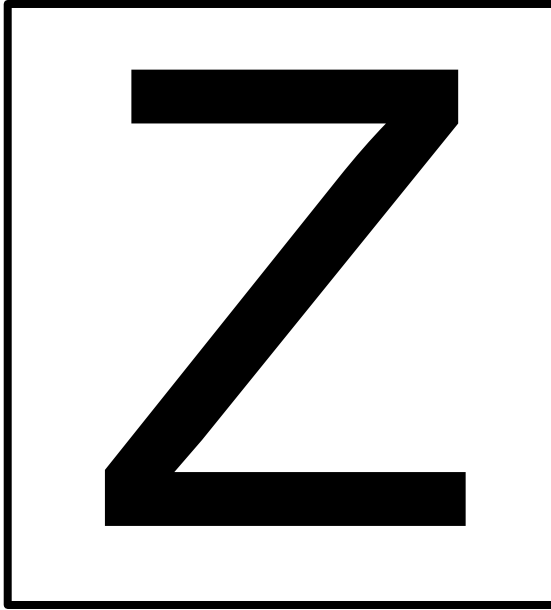
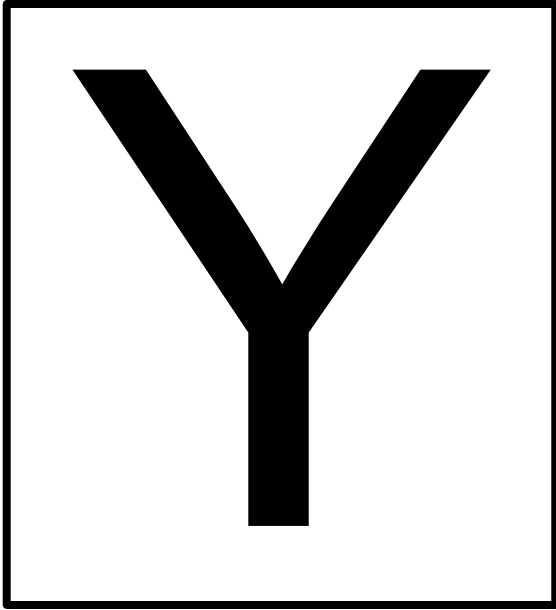
Q

R

Match the Letters-Upper Case



Match the Letters-Upper Case



Match the Letters-Lower Case

a

b

c

d

e

f

Match the Letters-Lower Case

g

h

i

j

k

l

Match the Letters-Lower Case

m

n

o

p

q

r

Match the Letters-Lower Case

s

t

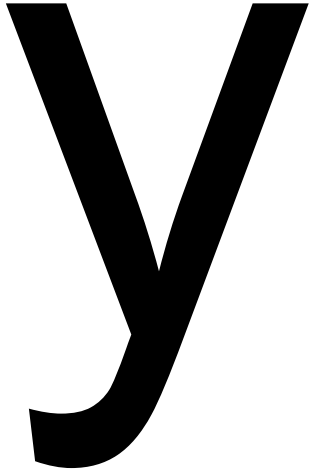
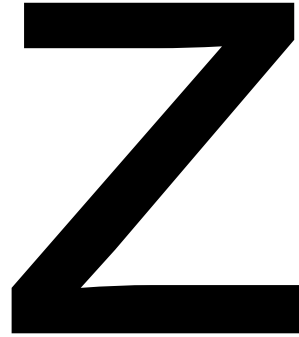
u

v

w

x

Match the Letters-Lower Case

A large, bold, black lowercase letter 'y' is centered within a square box with a black border. The letter has a long vertical stem and a small tail that curves to the left.A large, bold, black lowercase letter 'z' is centered within a square box with a black border. The letter has a horizontal top bar, a diagonal stem, and a horizontal bottom bar.

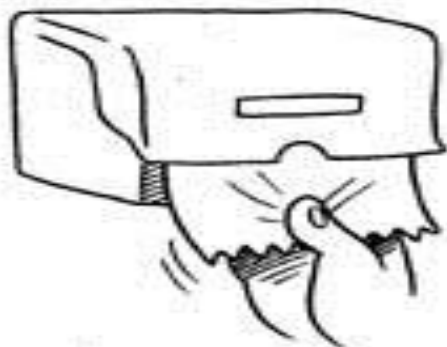
START →



1. Wet hands



6. Turn off
taps with
towel



5. Towel dry

HAND WASHING STEPS



2. Soap
(20 seconds)



3. Scrub backs
of hands, wrists,
between fingers,
under fingernails.



4. Rinse

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- A file folder game
- Themed calendar pieces
- A playdough recipe
- 2 activity mats
- An 8 X 10 Song poster & song card (for transitions!)



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