

Patterns

Patterns are when objects, numbers or symbols are arranged in a predictable way.

It is important for a child to be able to recognize a pattern and continue it.

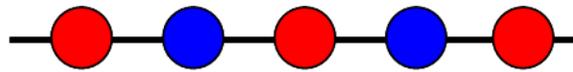
Early teaching should focus on very simple patterns, but even adults can enjoy creating or solving more complex pattern puzzles.

Your child needs to learn to recognize patterns, to continue a pattern that has been started, and to create patterns. There are patterns all around us. Watch for and talk about patterns that you see. Fences, floor tiles, wallpaper and gardens are just a few places where you may find patterns. Eventually children can use patterns to design their own fences, floor tiles, wallpaper or gardens.

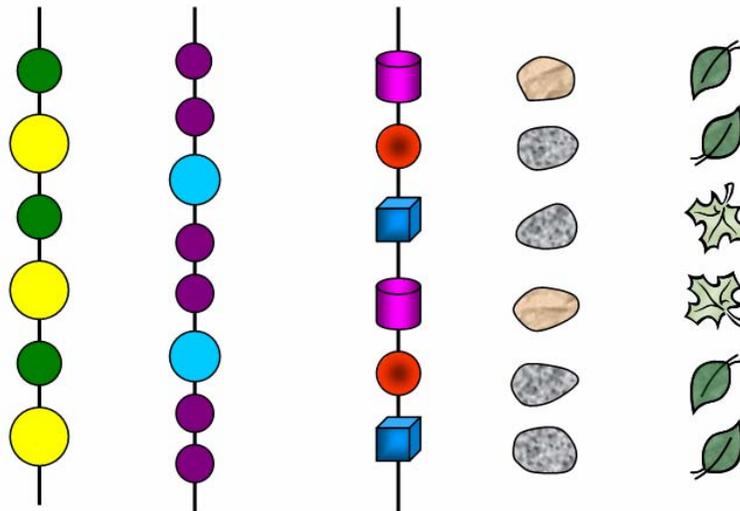
For beginning math students, the best teaching approach is to have the student look for and use patterns in natural situations rather than to sit down and “teach patterns.” Provide opportunities for your child to use the following activities, and talk together as he or she plays.

Stringing Buttons and Beads

A good way to start with patterns is to string buttons or beads. Large wooden or plastic beads or buttons can be used. (If you have a child who still puts things in his or her mouth, do not leave your child unsupervised and use only large beads or buttons. Stores or catalogs that carry preschool supplies often have these available.) When you start making patterns, use only two alternating elements, such as a red bead, then a blue bead, then a red bead, etc.



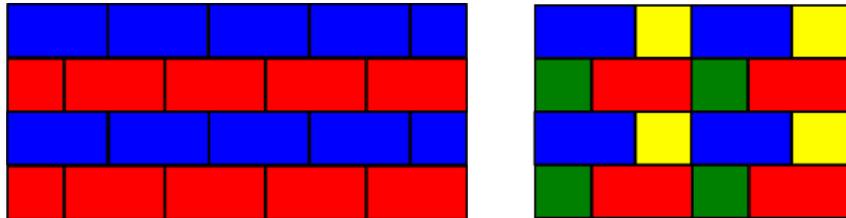
Later you can add more complex patterns, involving different colors and differently shaped objects. Large lacing beads or buttons work well for patterns because once they are on the string, they aren't easily moved, but you can use anything. Stones, shells, different brands of juice or soda cans, leaves, blocks, etc., can all be used to form patterns.



Blocks

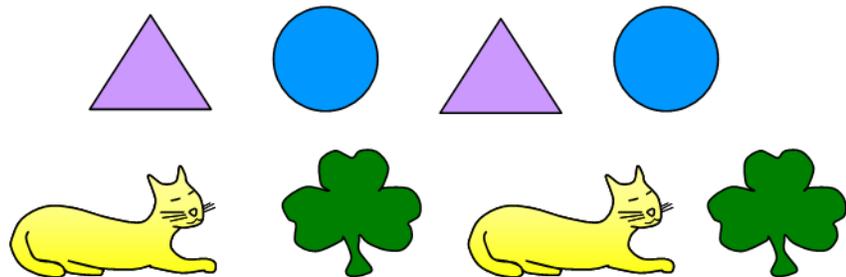
Whether you use interlocking blocks like Duplos[®], or simply wooden blocks, you can easily look for or create patterns. As with stringing beads, start off with simple patterns, and later create more complex patterns.

- Make a pattern and have your child copy it.
- Have your child make a pattern for you to copy.
- Start a pattern and have your child complete it.
- When you construct houses, put patterns of color or sizes in the walls.



Coloring

You can draw pictures to color that have simple patterns. You can draw simple figures or basic shapes.



You can also help your child draw or color patterns to form borders around his or her artwork.

Rhythms

Music and poetry both follow patterns. Learning the pattern of words and sounds can help your child's math abilities as well as help with reading and language skills. Even if your child isn't in formal music lessons, expose him or her to both instrumental and vocal music and to poetry.

- Read books written in rhyme.
- Have your child memorize poems and songs.
- Make drums from oatmeal or other cardboard or plastic food tubs, then play the drums in time to songs or poems.
- Clap, jump, or hop to music.

Pattern Picture Books

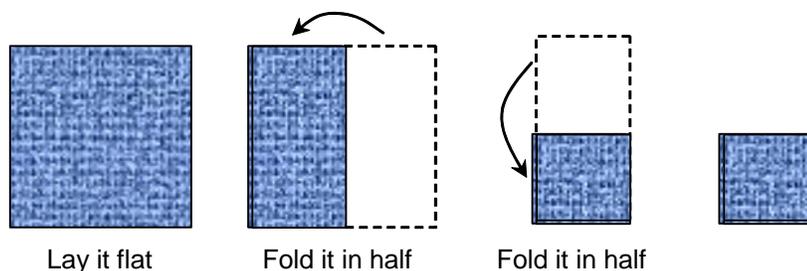
There are many picture books that use patterns in their stories, rhymes, or illustrations. A wide variety of excellent books is available. Spend lots of time in the library. Here are some authors and types of books you might enjoy with your child:

- Tana Hoban’s books are primarily photographs, sometimes with a few words. They are great books to use for talking with your child. Have him or her find colors, shapes, patterns, etc.
- Eric Carle’s books generally have a pattern of story or words, involve some sort of counting, and are really fun with great illustrations. There is usually some sort of multi-sensory aspect to these books that adds a delightful twist.
- Bill Martin Jr. (*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*) has books with simple word patterns that are predictable and easy to memorize.
- Nancy White Carlstrom writes the *Jessie Bear* books. They are very rhythmic, have great illustrations, and are wonderful read-a-loud books.
- There are many nursery rhyme books that have beautiful illustrations. Mother Goose poems are often put to music, also, so you can sing or read them to your child.

Chores and Daily Activities

Many daily tasks involve patterns.

- Teach your child to set the table in a specific pattern, with silverware and dishes in specific spots in relationship to each other. (If your child has trouble with remembering the pattern, draw outlines of the dishes and silverware on a sheet of paper and help him or her copy the pattern with the actual items.)
- You can set up toy areas with specific spots for specific items. Teach your child the pattern of putting toys away, each in its own spot.
- Dust with patterns (for example: “circle circle, long swipe, circle, long swipe...”).
- Help your child fold clothes and say the pattern of folding aloud. For example, if folding washcloths you might say, “Lay it flat, fold it in half, fold it in half, all done!” and repeat the same words with each washcloth.



If you look for them, you will find many places in your household routine where you use patterns. Take the time to speak the patterns to your child.

Stamps

Most children love to use stamps, and stamping is a wonderful way to make patterns. Stamp a series of pictures in patterns, such as a dog, a cat, a dog, a cat, and then have your child choose which picture he or she should stamp next in order to continue the pattern. Have your child make patterns for you to continue. (The ability to create patterns usually comes *after* the ability to complete patterns that someone else has created.)

There are many types of stamps you can use:

- Purchase rubber stamps and child-safe ink pads
- Make your own stamps by cutting sponges into shapes. These can be used with tempera paint or finger paint.
- Cut solid fruits and vegetables (like potatoes, carrots, and apples) in half and use them as stamps. (Make sure an adult does the cutting.) For fancier stamps, the adult can cut patterns into the fruits and vegetables.
- Using child-safe ink pads, make patterns with thumb or finger prints. Patterns can be made with different colors, or by putting the prints in different positions on the paper (for example, high, high, low, high, high, low, etc.).