

ART · GRADES 3–4

Tessellations

Shapes that fit together perfectly

What is a tessellation?

A tessellation is a pattern made of one or more shapes that fits together with NO GAPS and NO OVERLAPS. Look at a tile floor, a brick wall, or a honeycomb — those are tessellations. Only three regular shapes tessellate on their own: triangles, squares and hexagons.

Try this

1. Use squared paper. Draw squares, triangles, then hexagons. All three fit perfectly!
2. Now try regular pentagons (5 sides). Do they fit?
3. Try a circle. Does it tessellate? Why or why not?
4. Combine TWO shapes — squares and triangles. Make a tessellation pattern.
5. Look up M.C. Escher tessellations. What did he do that's different?

Make your own animal tessellation

1) Cut a square from card. 2) Cut a curve from one side. 3) Tape the cut piece to the OPPOSITE side, in the same position. 4) Trace this new shape onto paper, then slide it to fit next to itself. It will tessellate. 5) Add eyes, mouth, etc. — turn the shape into a fish, bird, or made-up creature.

