

Mystery Sorting Rule

Classroom-ready printable pack · Grades 3–8

Pack contents

shape, number, word, picture-symbol, rule, and blank cards Two student sets are included.

Teacher directions

1. Give partners identical card sets and organizer mats; keep the model or rule hidden from the Builder.
2. The Describer selects a sample or creates curriculum-specific content on the write-in blanks.
3. Communicate the words, relationships, order, or rule without revealing the finished arrangement.
4. Compare, cite the clue that resolved each choice, and revise ambiguous language.

Before class

- Print at 100% on US Letter paper. Use cardstock or laminate for reuse.
- Cut on the thick solid borders. Keep Set A and Set B separate.
- Give challenge/model cards only to the Describer.
- Use a folder, book, or tabletop barrier so partners cannot see each other's work.

Accessibility and accommodations

Read cards aloud or use text-to-speech; reduce the set; preteach key words; allow pointing to a language strip. Text is paired with symbols/patterns, and write-in blanks permit local reading-level adjustments.

Storage-envelope labels

Mystery Sorting Rule

Set A — Describer

Count pieces before storing.

Mystery Sorting Rule

Set B — Builder

Count pieces before storing.

Mystery Sorting Rule

Challenge / model cards

Count pieces before storing.

Mystery Sorting Rule

Teacher reference

Count pieces before storing.

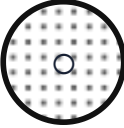
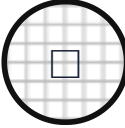
Student language supports

Position: above · below · beside · between · near · far · left · right · clockwise**Clarify:** “Please repeat...” · “Is ___ beside ___?” · “What should I place next?”**Compare:** same · different · rotate · move · replace · sequence

Movable pieces

Set A

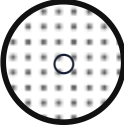
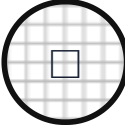
Cut on the solid borders. This set is identical to the partner set.

 circle	 square	 triangle	 rectangle
 2	 3	 4	 5
 plant	 rock	 blank	 rule

Movable pieces

Set B

Cut on the solid borders. This set is identical to the partner set.

 circle	 square	 triangle	 rectangle
 2	 3	 4	 5
 plant	 rock	 blank	 rule

Mystery Sorting Rule organizer

Cut the page in half. Both partner mats are identical.

Set A — Mystery Sorting Rule organizer

center • sequence / relationship • evidence • revision notes

top / far

center

bottom / near

Set B — Mystery Sorting Rule organizer

center • sequence / relationship • evidence • revision notes

top / far

center

bottom / near

Describer-only challenge cards

Keep these cards hidden from the Builder.

Challenge 1

has four sides

Challenge 2

is even

Challenge 3

names a living thing

Challenge 4

has a curved edge

Mystery Sorting Rule reference

Language and answer-key guidance

Sample sets are original, short, and intentionally controlled. Use the exact sequence or relationship printed on the Descriptor card as the sample key. When teachers use blanks, create and retain a matching reference before class. Accept synonyms only when they preserve the intended relationship.

Review locally added content for reading level, cultural fairness, copyright, and unambiguous answers. Do not use copyrighted characters or passages.

Quality check after a round

- Can each student identify pieces by shape or label without relying on color?
- Do both models match in pieces, order, orientation, and relative position?
- Which direction was most precise? Which should be revised?