

This lesson introduces students to mandalas, what they are and why we make them. Learn to recognize mandalas in nature and art and watch an online video about their creation. Create cooperative mandalas from non-traditional art materials, and draw some mandalas, as well.

Objectives

Learn to:

1. understand what the word mandala means
2. recognize mandala shapes in nature
3. understand why people make mandalas
4. create mandalas using a variety of materials.

Materials

- Computer, tablet or phone to connect to the internet
- Floor mandala supplies – anything from twist ties to buttons to paper clips to toothpicks. Find small objects to create mandalas from. You can sort them by type, if you like – e.g. plastic items, natural items, all white or pink or blue items, etc.
- Mandala template to plan your mandala (included)
- Heavy duty tin foil and/or an old CD
- Newspapers as pads for under foil
- Pencils, rulers, protractors, triangles
- Sharpies

What is a mandala?

Mandala a Sanskrit word meaning circle or centre. Mandalas are often referred to as magic circles or endless circles. Mandalas appear in many religions and cultures throughout time. They are used for meditation, healing self-discovery and creativity.



Circles are important shapes in our world.

They wake us up in the morning and keep us warm all day long.

They say goodnight to us before bed.

These circles we see around us are also called mandalas.

Mandalas are in the flowers. They are delicate.

Mandalas are in the trees. They are strong.



Mandalas are at the beach.

They are everywhere.

The more you look for them...

The more you notice them.

People from all over the world create mandalas

And they have been for centuries.

People make mandalas to relax and focus.



They make mandalas to play and create.

And they make mandalas together.



Watch this video about Tibetan monks creating a sand mandala:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA3su0ECdPc>. It is an ephemeral (temporary) mandala.

Here are some things for you to think about:

- What was the new word we learned for circle?
- What were some of the mandalas you saw?
- Can you think of other mandalas in nature?
- A mandala can be made using almost anything. It just has to **start at the centre and grow out from the centre**. Sometimes people call mandalas endless circles.
- Did you know that mandalas have **radial balance**? Radial balance is like spokes on a bicycle. It is based on a central point with the elements going out from that central point. A windmill has radial balance. So does an orange.
- **Unity** is important in mandalas too. A principle of art, **unity** occurs when all of the elements of a piece combine to make a balanced, harmonious, complete *whole*. Unity is another of those hard-to-describe art terms but, when it's present, your eye and brain are pleased to see it. Repeating shapes and colours contribute to unity. Many mandalas have repeating shapes and colours.

Activities:

1. Temporary Treasures



Did you watch the video of the monks making the sand mandala? What did the monks do after they finished? They destroyed the mandalas and returned the sand to the water. Their mandalas were **temporary** – not permanent. It was the process of making them that was important.

Now you can make a temporary mandala as well. Go on a scavenger hunt around your house for small items. Try to collect 10 – 20 of each item you find.



The World of Mandalas

Here are some items you can try:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Cotton swabs | Pennies |
| Paper clips | Pencils |
| Crayons | Plastic bread bag tags |
| Twist ties | Lego pieces |
| Buttons | Pebbles |
| Spruce cones | Thread spools or bobbins |
| Spoons and/or forks | Erasers |
| Pebbles | What else can you find? |

Using the “treasures” you have collected, start to make a mandala on the floor (be sure to make some space for your creation):

- a. Place one item in the center of your mandala.
- b. Pick another item type and arrange those pieces evenly around the first item.
- c. Create another layer around the second layer.
- d. Continue building your mandala outward. As your mandala grows, you might have to use more than one item in a layer in an alternating pattern (e.g. pencil, pen, eraser, pencil, pen, eraser, pencil, pen...).
- e. When your mandala is finished, step back and take a look at it.
- f. Does it have radial symmetry? In other words, if you cut it into pie pieces, would each piece of the pie have the same items?
- g. Take a picture of your mandala, if you like, and put it in a journal.
- h. Then gather up your pieces.
- i. If you have time, make a new mandala. Will you use the same items in a different way, or will you use new items?
- j. At the Gallery, we save our mandala treasures in bags. Each bag has a theme: Fuzzy items, plastic items, colourful items, natural items, office desk items, etc. Maybe you can create your own mandala bags to pull out and use now and then.

2. Mandala Drawing



Using the mandala template provided (next page), draw your own mandala. Use pencils, markers, pencil crayons... whatever you have available.

- a. Just like with the floor **start from the centre**.
- b. Put a shape or line in one of the pie sections.
- c. Next, draw that same shape or line in every other section.
- d. Add another shape to the first pie section... and then to every other section.
- e. Repeat until your mandala is full.
- f. Colour in your design – ensure that your colours are also symmetrical and provide unity to your mandala.

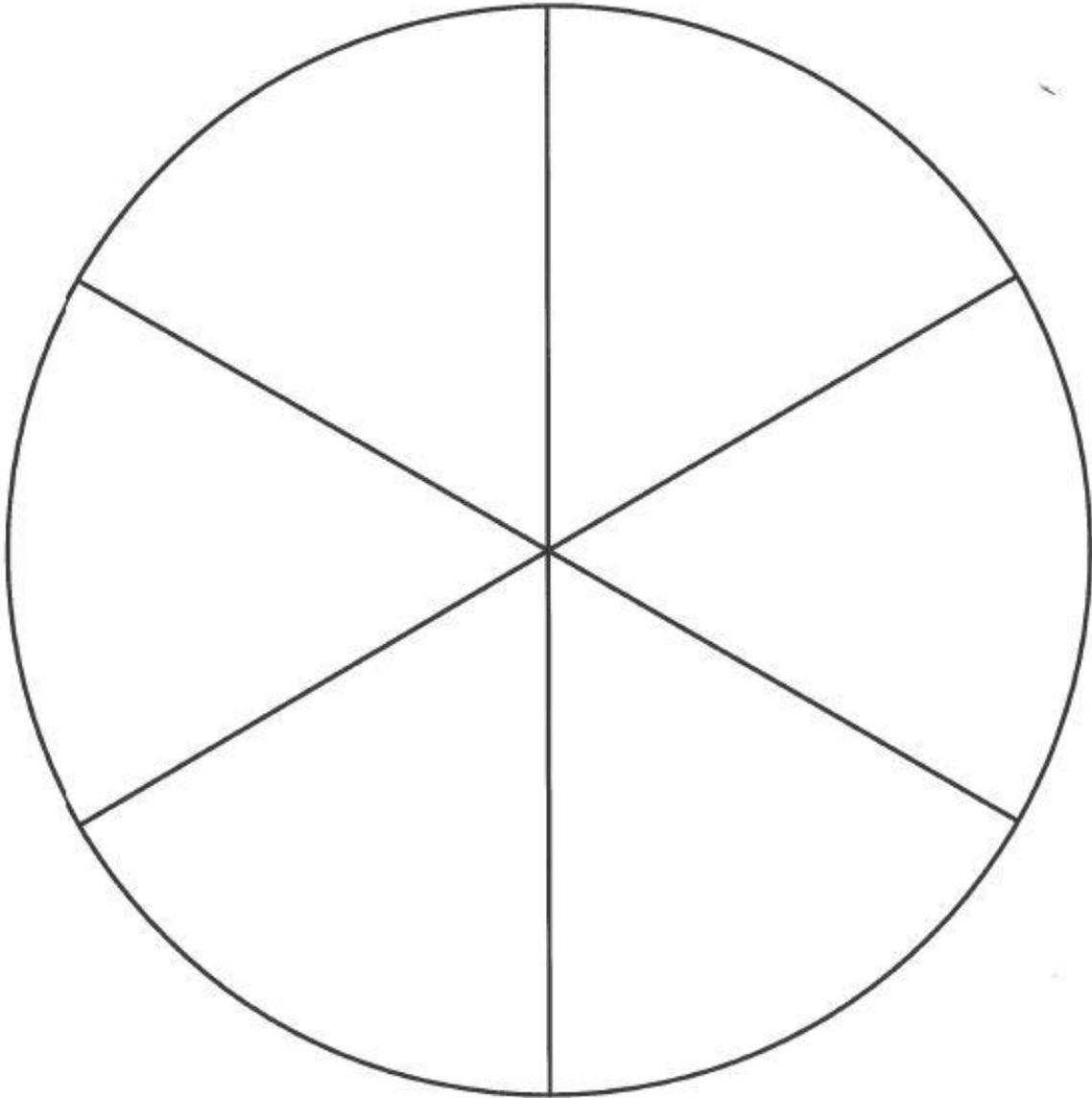
Here are some ideas of things to add to your mandala: triangles, circles, diamonds, waves, x's, lines, hearts, leaves, flowers...

For older students:

- a. Draw or trace a large circle.
- b. Divide it into 8 equal sections. Can you do this without drawing the lines? (Hint: try folding your circle in half and in half again until you have 8 sections)
- c. Follow steps a - e above to create your mandala OR
- d. Consider making a mandala where every other pie section has matching design (look at the foil mandala for an example of that).
- e. You can make your mandala without drawing lines that divide the pie section, if you like..

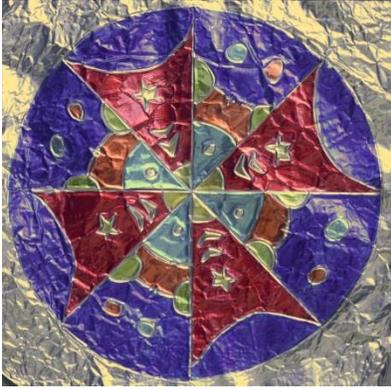


Template for 6-segment mandala





3. Foil Mandalas Create a mandala from heavy duty tin foil.



- a. Plan your mandala on paper, as described above.
- b. Lay a piece of heavy duty tin foil on a pad of newspaper or a magazine.
- c. Lay your paper plan over the tin foil.
- d. Using a ballpoint pen or dull pencil, trace over your plan, pushing firmly but gently onto the paper (too hard and the foil could rip; too soft, and the design may not transfer).
- e. When you have finished tracing your design, remove the paper and look at the shiny foil mandala you have created.
- f. If you like, you may colour it with markers. Remove the foil from the padding first, and be careful not to flatten your indented lines.

4. CD Mandalas Recycle an old CD or DVD and make a colourful mandala.



- a. Lay an old CD over the mandala template, centering in the template.
- b. Use a ruler and a sharpie to draw the pie sections, using the lines on the template as guidelines.
- c. Plan your design on paper first, if you like.
- d. Use sharpies to create your mandala, starting in the centre and moving outward with your drawing.