Children are born spatially aware. Even from birth, newborns can track their parents' movements. Studies have shown that minutes after birth, newborns are more likely to follow a human-like face than a blank outline of a head (Platas, 2017). Spatial awareness involves knowing about shapes, space, positions, directions, and movement. Puzzles, tangrams, blocks, and sand play are great ways to teach spatial awareness, especially because adults can incorporate focused vocabulary while playing with children. Important vocabulary to use includes: *above, below, in front of, next to, rectangle, rhombus, edge, corner, face,* and *side* (Trautner, 2019).

**Object and Shape Perception and Attributes**
- Children’s vocabulary acquisition increases greatly by around 18 months; they begin to name and categorize objects.
- Children begin to develop part-whole relationships; they are able to distinguish aspects of an object and to synthesize it as a whole. For example, they may see a corner of a favorite toy sticking out from under a chair, recognize it for what it is, and retrieve it.
- This is also when children begin to recognize objects in different orientations as being the same object (a chair is a chair whether it is standing upright or tipped over).

**Object/Shape Physical and Mental Manipulations**
- Through the manipulation of two- and three-dimensional objects, children develop the ability to control and coordinate their movements.
- Provide children abundant opportunities to explore their environments; this will help to improve their fine and gross motor skills.
- When children are developing spatial manipulation skills, they may insist on placing toys in a certain location or walk a certain way on the sidewalk.

**Spatial Language**
- As children learn the language associated with spatial awareness, they are able to communicate their navigational needs.
- Example spatial language
  - Location/position—under, above, in front of
  - Attributes—long, high, side, angle, same, symmetrical
  - Orientation/mental transformation—left, turn, match
  - Geometric shape names—cone, cylinder, triangle, circle

Teachers need to be intentional in designing both structured and non-structured activities to develop children’s understanding of spatial relationships. Structured activities include playing games like “I Spy” and “Guess My Shape”, in which teachers provide students an attribute. Non-structured activities include puzzles, blocks, tangrams, and drawing (Platas, 2017).

**References:**