

THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

CLASSROOM | K-3 Lessons : “The Colors and Shapes of the White House”

Once you go inside the White House, it is not very white! Three of the rooms are so colorful that they are called the Green Room, the Blue Room, and the Red Room. And it is not just the walls that are colorful. Look at the carpets, the drapes on the windows, the couches and the chairs.

Why are these rooms so colorful? Presidents long ago used these colors in the rooms and most presidents after them did, too. Thomas Jefferson, our third president, had a green carpet in the “Green Room.” President Martin van Buren started using blue to decorate the Blue Room in 1837. When John Tyler was president in the 1840s, people started calling the Red Room red. Today, when these rooms are decorated, these colors are still used.



Green Room



Blue Room



Red Room

You can also find many shapes inside and outside the White House.



Rectangles

The State Dining Room and East Room are rectangles.

The president and first lady have always had parties and dinners in the White House. In the State Dining Room, 140 people can sit down for dinner.

In the East Room, even more people can sit and listen to a concert or a speaker. Big Bird sang with the Marine Band in the East Room!



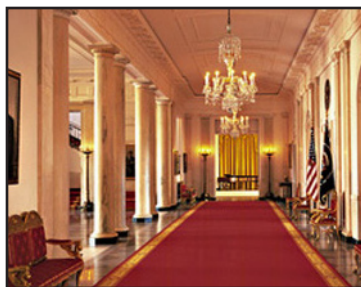
State Dining Room



“Big Bird” at children’s diplomatic reception in the East Room, 1978

The Cross Hall is also a rectangle. A hall is a place where many people walk from one room to another. Like all the rooms in the White House, many changes have been made over the years. Here is the Cross Hall in 1889. Another hall at the same time had many shapes on the floor. The Entrance Hall had pretty tiles on the floor made of squares, circles and diamonds.

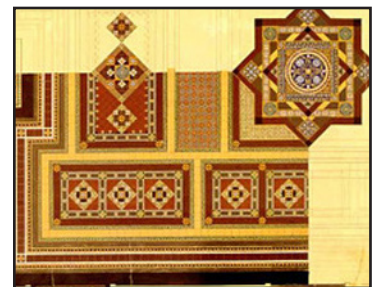
These big rooms are rectangles. If you think about your living room or dining room in your house, it is probably a rectangle too. The biggest rooms in buildings are usually rectangles.



Cross Hall



Cross Hall in 1889. Library of Congress



Entrance Hall design, 1880. National Archives



Squares

The Green Room and Red Room are squares. Small groups of people can meet here. Presidents and first ladies had tea here. Thomas Jefferson ate dinner in the Red Room. These rooms are sometimes called parlors.



Green Room



Red Room

Ovals

There are four oval rooms in the White House. An oval is like an egg. It is not a perfect round circle. It is a little flat on two sides, but has no sharp corners. If the president invited you to dinner or a party, he might meet you in the oval Blue Room. You would shake hands there and then go to another room that was big enough to hold everyone. A long time ago, people would stand near the walls in a circle. The president would speak to each person as he walked around the circle. There is another oval room above the Blue Room. This is called the Yellow Oval Room. President John Adams had his first reception in this room.

The president works in the Oval Office. He can pick his desk, chairs, couches, and the pictures that hang on the wall. The president has meetings and meets visitors here. He also has another office on the second floor of the White House.



Blue Room



Yellow Oval Room



The Oval Office



Other Shapes

There are other shapes in the White House. They help make the building more beautiful.

Colors and shapes are important parts of the White House. They are important in all buildings. Now that you have seen colors and shapes in the White House, you can look for them in stores, schools, churches, and other houses.



Arch



Half-Circle



Triangle

