



What you'll need

- Pen/pencil
- Paper
- Sticky tack

Special materials

A camera can be used to capture the faces you find.

You can also find a set of eyes to print off at rigb.org/ExpeRimental or you could get some googly eyes from an arts and craft shop.

What to do

Being safe

Adult supervision is needed if going out and about to look for faces. And if cutting out the printed eyes take care with the scissors.

Introduction: Ask your children if they have ever noticed a face hidden in a pattern or random object. You can show them some examples by using ours at rigb.org/ExpeRimental, or do an image search for “Pareidolia” on the internet. Suggest that you go looking for your own hidden faces.

Activity: Ask your child what kind of things they would expect to see on a face, this is your list of facial features. They shouldn't find it too difficult and the activity will work so long as you have at least eyes, nose, and mouth on your list. Put these features in a list with room to count them off as you look at the faces. If you're using a camera to take photos, you can leave the counting till afterwards.

Now go out and about looking for faces.

It can be hard at first, but once you start to notice them you will find things that look like faces everywhere. This could also be done on a special walk for this activity, while on a normal trip out, to the shops for example, or even across a number of days.

Either during your trip, or afterwards if taking photos, make a note of the features your faces include by counting them on your list of facial features. When you're happy you've



What to do (continued)

collected enough faces, have a look at how many of each facial feature appeared and together with your child decide which features are the most important for you to recognise a face. You should find that eyes are the most commonly found feature.

Follow up: As eyes should be the most common feature, ask your child if adding some eyes to any random object will help it to look like a face. If you want to try it for yourself, you can draw some eyes, get some googly eyes, or print off our set of eyes from rigb.org/ExpeRimental. Stick these wherever you like and see what faces you can create.

Questions to ask children

Before the activity:

Where have you seen faces before?

What features might you see on a face?

During the activity:

How do you think these face feel? Why?

After the activity:

Why would it be useful or important to be so good at being able to spot faces?

What clues do we need to see an emotion on a face?

The science

We are constantly looking to make sense out of what we can see, so random patterns often seem to form recognisable shapes. One part of the brain, the fusiform gyrus, is particularly active when looking at familiar things, particularly faces. Faces seem to be something we are extremely good at finding and recognising. Even very young children will recognise, or at least follow, a face made from only two dots and a line, in a classic “Smiley Face” configuration.

As social animals it is important for us humans to recognise each other and even get clues about how each other are feeling. So spotting faces, and reading their emotions, is an



The science
(continued)

extremely useful skill. It's theorised that because we are so keenly looking for real faces, we will often make the mistake of seeing a face where there isn't one. To put it another way, it's better for us to see faces where there are none, than to not recognise faces that are there.

There is a condition where a person is unable to recognise a face, this is called prosopagnosia, sometimes known as "face blindness". People with prosopagnosia are unable to recognise faces in the same way as others and have to find other ways to recognise the people around them, including family members, such as their hair, clothing, and context.

Seeing faces, or familiar objects in random patterns is part of a phenomenon known as apophenia. This has been described as our need to make sense of randomness and find patterns and meanings where there aren't any. So a cloud that looks like a dog fits into our model of the world better than a shapeless mass of water vapour.

Going Further

our ability to recognise faces can be played with in other ways. Try looking at the upside down faces at rigb.org/ExpeRimental to see how good or bad we are at looking at the details of faces versus the whole face.

