

What is a Symbol?

Take a “symbols” walk.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- 1 understand the term symbol
- 2 identify one symbol in the surroundings through drawing a symbol

OTHER MATERIALS

- Paper, colors or markers

TEACHER PREPARATION

- At either the top or the bottom of a blank piece of paper write the words "Symbols communicate. This symbol means_____." Leave room on the paper for each child to draw a picture. Make one copy per student.
- Be prepared to take your class on a walk around the block or the halls of the school.
- For the first step of this activity gather pictures of symbols together ahead of time (pictures from magazines or catalogs will work) or locate some in your classroom that you can point to.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Symbols are part of communication just like words and sounds. A symbol stands for things like thoughts, commands, or feelings.

People run across symbols every day of their lives. A smiley face sticker means "Good job" or that someone is happy. A street sign with people walking in a crosswalk means a school crossing. Some symbols are made through body movements instead of being written down. A person standing across the room swinging their arm in a circular motion with their palm moving back towards their body is probably trying to say "Come on." Someone holding their arm straight out with their palm away from them is trying to say "Stop."



Schools and various organizations have special symbols of their own. Some schools have school colors or a school song. When these colors are worn or the song is sung people think of the school. Some athletic teams have symbols, such as the K State Wildcat or the KU Jayhawk. When people see these symbols on shirts, banners, and signs they think of that team.

VOCABULARY

Communicate	To exchange or pass along feelings, thoughts, or information. Examples include speaking or writing.
Symbol	Something that stands for something else. Symbols are used to communicate words, emotions, directions, etc.

ACTIVITY

- 1) Tell the class that you're going to talk about symbols. Ask the class what a symbol is.
 - ® *Symbols communicate information to us by using a picture, word, song, etc. to make us think of something else. For example, a no smoking sign is not someone standing there telling people not to smoke, but usually a picture of a cigarette with a red circle around it and a red line through it. People seeing this sign know they are not supposed to smoke.*
 - ® *Other examples include railroad crossing signs (circular with a large "X" in the middle and an "R" on either side) or the wildcat or jayhawk images of K-State and KU athletic teams.*

At this time share the examples of symbols gathered in advance or located in the room.

- 2) Once the class understands the term symbol take them on a walk around the block or the inside of the school. Have them look for symbols during their walk. Examples of symbols that may be present include exit signs, storm shelter signs, school crossing signs, and commercial establishment signs such as the golden arches of McDonald's.
- 3) On their return to the room review some of the symbols that the class saw during their walk.

Give each child a piece of the paper labeled "Symbols communicate..." and some colors or markers. Have each student draw one of the symbols they saw. Write in the symbol he/she drew on the paper.

