

All about moquette

If you've been on any public transport in London, chances are you've seen moquette. In fact, you've probably sat on it. Moquette is the name of the fabric that covers the seats of all London buses, tubes, trams & cable cars. We're going to be looking in more detail at the history of this really useful fabric and how it is designed and made.

The word moquette comes from the French word for carpet!

Moquette is normally made from 85% wool and 15% nylon. All that wool means it's cool in summer and warm in winter.

It's woven using a technique called Jacquard weaving.



The first moquette

The first specially designed moquette pattern for London Transport was called Lozenge. It was made in 1923 by Firth Furnishings Ltd and followed the fashion in home furnishings and Art Deco styles of the day.

How many colours can you see in it?



Where have you seen moquette used?

Over the years moquette fabric has been used on the Underground, buses, trams, trolleybuses, the DLR, Overground and the cable-car over the Thames!

Why is moquette so colourful and complicated?

Think about all the people who use the seats in a day! The fabric needs to use colours that **hide dirt, vandalism and wear and tear**. It also has to **blend in** to the design of the vehicle so it doesn't stand out and it should **look good in daylight and by artificial light**. Lastly, it **mustn't cause 'dazzle'** which is when the artificial light and the vehicle's movement causes the pattern to appear to move - it can cause dizziness. That's a lot of jobs for one bit of fabric!



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From brief to seat – how moquette is made

Moquette fabric doesn't just appear in thin air when it is needed. There are many stages the fabric goes through in its journey from someone's brain to a train seat.

There is a need

TfL decide they need some new fabric for a new tube line.



Brief the designer

A **brief** is written for the designer. A brief is a set of instructions given to artists and designers when work is commissioned.



Rough sketches

The designer creates some rough sketches showing their ideas. Sometimes they'll be asked to make changes, but eventually one of the sketches is chosen.



Final artwork

The designer draws the final coloured-in artwork.



Adapted to a fabric design

A textile designer will take the final artwork and adapt it so it is suitable for weaving in fabric.



Yarn is dyed

All of the thread (yarn) is dyed the correct colour.



Yarn is woven

The yarn is shipped to another factory, sometimes in another country to be woven on a giant loom.



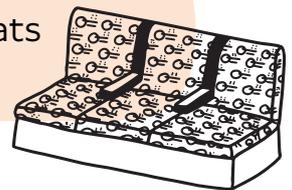
Fabric is finished

The fabric is shipped back to the UK to be finished. Finishing means it is made fire-resistant and it's trimmed so it looks neat.



Moquette is put to use

The finished fabric is upholstered on to seats in a tube carriage.



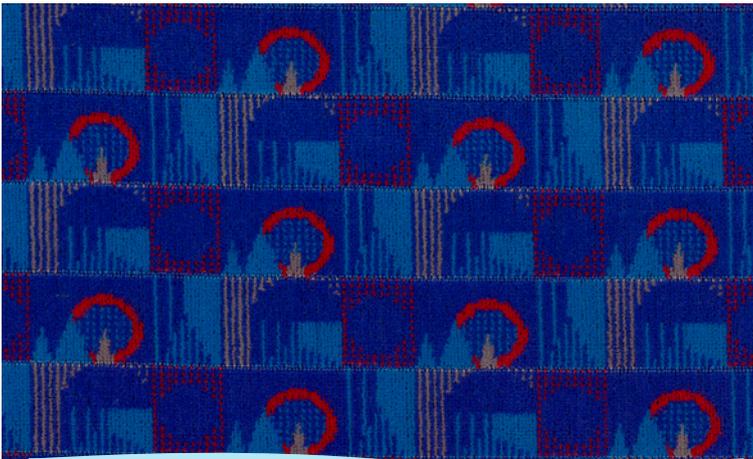
Cut out all these stages and jumble them up. Work together with a friend. Can you put them back together in the right order?



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Barman – an iconic moquette



Did you know?

Wallace Sewell is actually two people! Harriet Wallace-Jones & Emma Sewell. They first worked with TfL after entering a competition to design the moquette for the London Overground.



Wallace Sewell is the name of their design studio which makes and sells textiles and home furnishings.

This iconic design can be found on the Northern, Central & Jubilee Lines. Recoloured versions are also used on the Bakerloo and Piccadilly lines.

The print was designed by Wallace Sewell and features London landmarks. **Can you spot the London Eye, St Paul's Cathedral, Big Ben & Tower Bridge?**

The design uses just 4 colours but how the threads are woven makes it look like there are more. The more colours there are, the more expensive it is to make. Moquette designs tend to be 4 or 5 colours. Transport for London will tell the designer what colours and how many to use at the start of a project.

The Barman moquette is named after Christian Barman, Royal Designer for Industry (1898 - 1980) who was London Transport's Publicity Officer and was responsible for many elements of Underground design, including commissioning moquette for the system in 1936!



The London Transport Museum has a large online collection of resources on Moquette (and many other things) that you can browse. You can view it here: <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/projects/moquette-project>



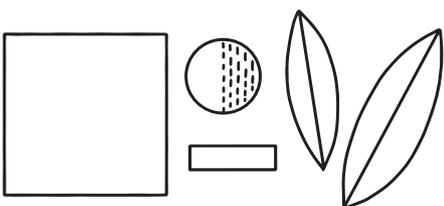
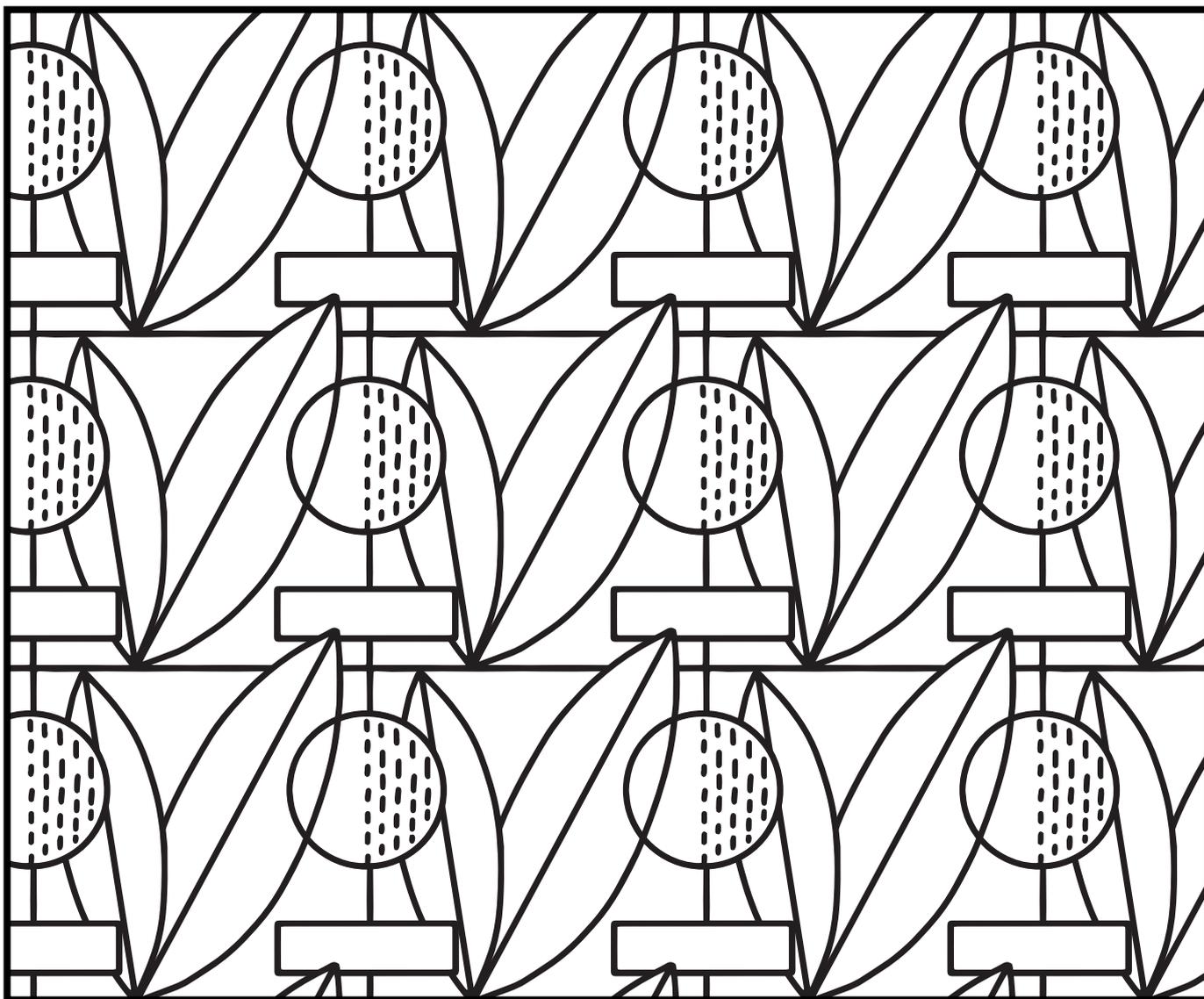


Activity 1 – Colouring in

Hello! My name is Elly. I'm an illustrator and I worked with the London Transport Museum to develop this worksheet. I've had a go designing a moquette but I need your help to colour it in.



Pick four colours to use. Think about where the shapes overlap - try mixing two colours together to get a brand new one.



I was inspired by London's green parks for this design.
Can you guess what the different shapes represent?



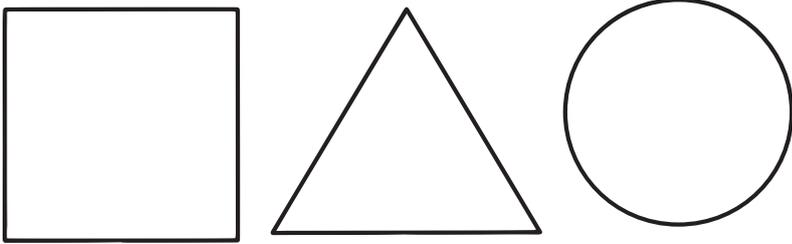


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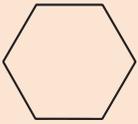
Activity 2 – Repeat patterns

Moquettes are repeating patterns. On a separate piece of paper, please **choose one of the shapes below and see how many patterns you can make using those shapes**. If you get stuck, there are some examples below that may inspire you. You can colour in the shapes afterwards - try using two or three colours.

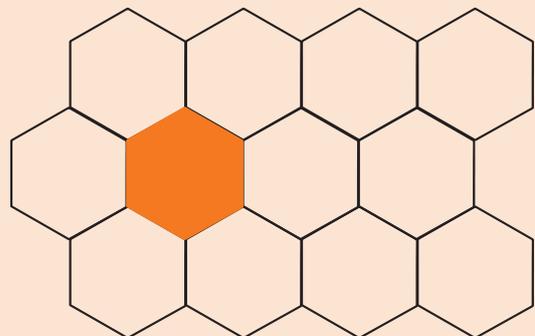
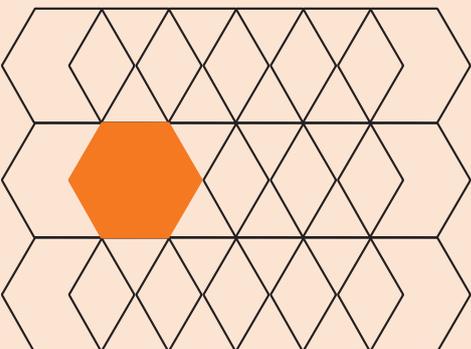
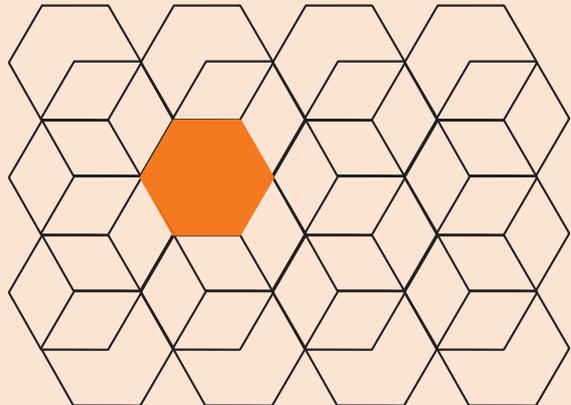
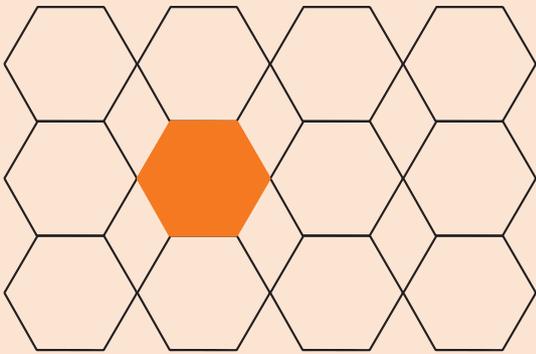


Top Tip:

Try cutting out a template of your shape to draw round. You can draw onto squared or graph paper to help make your pattern.



These are some of the patterns you can get when just using a hexagon. **How many patterns can you make?**



Activity 3 – Working to a brief

Imagine you have been asked to enter a competition to design some new fabric for Transport for London. Like Wallace Sewell, please work in pairs. Choose a brief from below and work together to draw a design for a moquette.

*Dear Artists,
Thank you for working together on this brief. We would like you to design a moquette fabric pattern for use on London's trains and buses. It must be colourful and be a repeat pattern. Please read the briefs carefully and choose one to do. Good luck!*

Brief 1

Title: Where I live.

Theme: Your design should take inspiration from your favourite places in your neighbourhood. These could include buildings, parks, trees, shops or anything else you walk past! Identify four shapes from these drawings and use them to create a repeating pattern.

Colours: You can use up to four colours of your choice.

Brief 2

Title: Green Transport.

Theme: London has 300 fully electric buses that have zero emissions, making them more environmentally friendly. Can you design a moquette to be used on these buses? Try and draw something that will make passengers think about the planet.

Colours: You can use three colours of your choice.

Brief 3

Title: Pattern and Shapes

Theme: Choose three shapes, one of them must be a square. Make a repeat pattern using these shapes. At least two of the shapes must be overlapping. Think about what you would call this design – can you think of a good name?

Colours: You must use four colours for this - one of them must be yellow.



Activity 4 – Quiz time!

Have you been paying attention? Time to test your knowledge of all things moquette! You can work through this quiz on your own or in teams of up to four people. All the answers have been mentioned in this activity - can you remember them?!

1: In 1923 the first moquette pattern was used by TfL. What was it called?

5: Who designed the Barman moquette?

2: The word 'moquette' comes from the French word for what?

a: Seat Cover b: Carpet c: Cushion

6: What happens when moquette fabric is 'finished'?

3: How many colours are usually in a moquette pattern?

7: How many London landmarks are in the Barman moquette?

a: Four b: Two c: Five

4: What is given to a designer before they start designing a moquette?

a: Payment b: Fabric c: A Brief

8: What is moquette usually made from?

