Rhythm is a part of life. Think of heartbeats, music, walking, dancing, or breathing. Rhythm as a design principle is based on repetition of colors, shapes, forms, lines, or value contrasts. Developing rhythm in a work of art will help unify the surface and create a feeling of organization.

Rhythm in art as in music, may change from one work to another. Staccato repetitions are like quick bursts of energy over a regular horizontal pattern.
Irregular or unplanned rhythms are formed by waves and sloshing water. Here, the flowing rhythms are unplanned and are not repeated exactly throughout the painting.

Regular rhythms may have variety and need not be repeated exactly. Although the nine chickens seem to look alike, each is a little different. Variety provides interest.

Regular rhythm is planned by an artist, crafts-person, or builder. The vertical boards in picket fences create regular rhythm because the boards and spaces are the same.
RHYTHM is the repetition of shapes, lines, and forms.

Architects repeat shapes of windows, columns, arches, or other details to unify the appearance of buildings. Several such repetitions or rhythms are seen in the United States Capitol.

Planned repetition produces visual rhythm. Ceramic artists often decorate their pieces with regularly repeated elements to create rhythm.

Irregular rhythms are often seen in nature because trees and plants are not planned.

A city's skyline is also irregular because buildings and spaces are different.
Rhythm Activities

**Note:** Copying the reproducibles at the end of the book may help you complete some of these activities.

1. Cut strips of colored paper and arrange them evenly in vertical rows on a piece of contrasting colored paper and glue them down. Cut out figure shapes in a variety of colors. Arrange them in a row, one strip, one figure, one strip, etc., and glue them down. This illustrates regular rhythm.

2. Cut strips and figure shapes as you did in the previous activity, but this time arrange the strips with unequal spaces between them and glue the figures at varying heights to create irregular rhythm.

3. Make a painting with tempera paint in which you paint the same object many times in a row overlapping them. This could be a large green leaf, a light bulb, a white cup with a pattern, or even a sitting dog. The overlapping of repeated shapes creates rhythm.

4. Find pictures in magazines that show regular rhythm in nature such as evenly spaced trees. Then find pictures of irregular rhythm and compare the two. Glue them down side by side, and underneath each picture, write a two-line rhyme about them that indicates whether they are regular or irregular.

5. Take pictures or find pictures in magazines that show regular or irregular rhythm in architecture. Windows, columns, and doors, even architectural elements on the face of a house or under its eaves often create rhythm in a structure. Glue them on a piece of paper and state whether they show regular or irregular rhythm.

6. Write down a list of pictures you could make that would show rhythm, such as ocean waves, many sand dunes in a row, rows of mountains in a background of a landscape, etc. Now draw the picture, then paint it. Did you notice that developing rhythm helps to unify the surface and create a pleasant feeling of planned organization.

7. Look at the work of several major artists on the internet, like Cézanne, Duchamp, de Chirico, Seurat, Matisse, and more, and see how they used rhythm to unify their artwork.