Practical Applications

Some ways that you might use shapes in your design are to:

- Organize, connect, separate
- Symbolize an idea
- Create movement
- Provide texture or depth
- Convey a mood or emotion
- Provide emphasis
- Provide a framework

Geometric Shapes
In addition to the basic square, circle, and triangle discussed so far, other geometric shapes have specific meanings, some culturally-based. An octagon, especially a red one, usually means stop. A starburst is commonly used to grab attention and identify something that is new, improved, or 'on sale.'

Natural Shapes
Natural shapes can add interest and reinforce a theme. Rather than a plain box, frame text with a coiling rope or a spray of leaves or flowers. Use a freeform, non-symmetrical shape to convey a feeling of spontaneity.
Abstract Shapes
Some abstract shapes are almost universally recognized and easily 'read' even when the text is in an unfamiliar language. The stylized wheelchair, the male and female symbols for restrooms, and the jagged steps for stairs or an escalator are some examples. Icons are often abstract or stylized shapes. For example, a rectangle with a 'folded corner' often indicates a page in a document or a word processing program. A hollow circle or oval with smaller circles on the 'path' may be a literal representation of a planetary system or symbolic of a network, such as a computer network.