

The Egyptian Tangram



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mmaca

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A square dissection firstly proposed as a tangram in:

Luna-Mota, C. (2019) *"El tangram egipci: diari de disseny"* Nou Biaix, 44

Origins

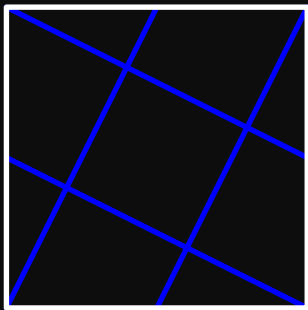
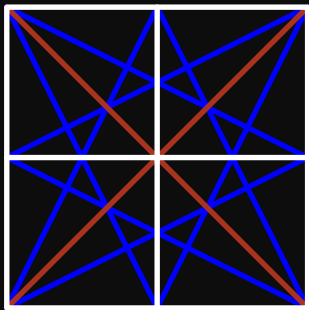
The Egyptian Tangram inspiration comes from the study of two other 5-piece tangrams...



The “Five Triangles” & “Greek-Cross” tangrams

Origins

...and their underlying grids

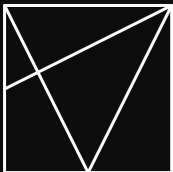
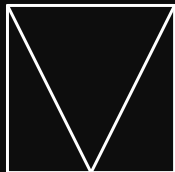
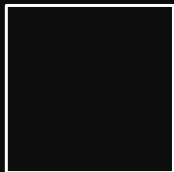


The “Five Triangles” & “Greek-Cross” underlying grids

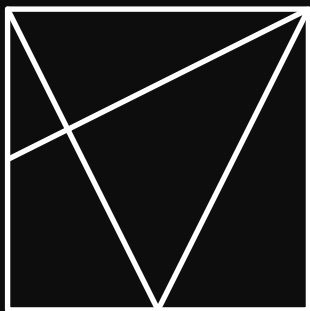
Design Process

The Egyptian Tangram is the result of an heuristic incremental design process:

Take a square and keep adding “the most interesting straight cut” until you have a dissection with 5 or more pieces.



Design Process



To make an Egyptian Tangram from a square:

1. Connect the midpoint of the lower side with the upper corners.
2. Connect the midpoint of the left side with the top right corner.

Antecedents

It turns out that this figure is not new...

See problem 3 from:

Detemple, D. & Harold, S. (1996) *"A Round-Up of Square Problems"*
Mathematics Magazine, 69:1

...but, to the best of our knowledge,
nobody used it before **as a tangram**

Antecedents

The name is not new either...



This dissection is often called “Egyptian Puzzle” or “Egyptian Tangram”

...but there is a good reason to consider
our dissection the real “Egyptian Tangram”

(even if it was designed in Barcelona)

Antecedents

The underlying grid is also a well known figure:



Brunés, T. (1967) *"The Secrets of Ancient Geometry – and Its Use"*

Bankoff, L. & W. Trigg, C. (1974) *"The Ubiquitous 3:4:5 Triangle"*,
Mathematics Magazine, 47:2

The pieces



- Just five pieces
- All pieces are different
- All pieces are asymmetric
- Areas are integer and not *too different*
- All sides are multiples of 1 or $\sqrt{5}$
- All angles are linear combinations of 90° and $\alpha = \arctan\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) \approx 26,565^\circ$

Name	Area	Sides	Angles
T1	1	1, 2, $\sqrt{5}$	90° , α , $90^\circ - \alpha$
T4	4	2, 4, $2\sqrt{5}$	90° , α , $90^\circ - \alpha$
T5	5	$\sqrt{5}$, $2\sqrt{5}$, 5	90° , α , $90^\circ - \alpha$
T6	6	3, 4, 5	90° , $90^\circ - 2\alpha$, 2α
Q4	4	1, 3, $\sqrt{5}$, $\sqrt{5}$	90° , $90^\circ - \alpha$, 90° , $90^\circ + \alpha$

The pieces

Although all pieces are asymmetric and different, they often combine to make symmetric shapes



The pieces

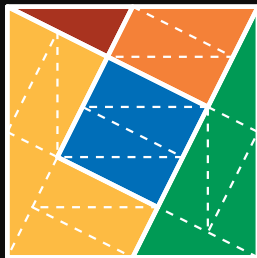
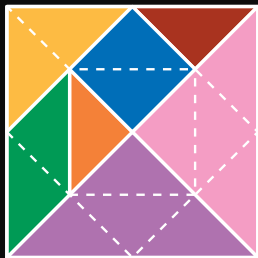
This means that it is very rare for an Egyptian Tangram figure to have a unique solution



There are three different solutions for the square and, in all three cases, two of the corners of the square are built as a sum of acute angles!

Why we called it the *Egyptian* Tangram?

The smallest pieces of the Chinese and Greek-Cross tangrams can be used to build all the other pieces...



...but you cannot do the same with
the Egyptian Tangram because of T6

Why we called it the *Egyptian* Tangram?

Initially, T6 was considered as the *leftover* piece that results from cutting all these $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangles from the borders of the square.

But it turned out to be a very well known triangle...



...the **Egyptian** Triangle (3:4:5)
and, hence, the name

Puzzles & Activities

Realistic figures

Use all five pieces to make these figures:



Gnome



Sailboat



Snowmobile



House



Teddy bear



Bow tie



Candle



Snail



Erlenmeyer



Viking hat



Penguin



Sea Turtle



Calf



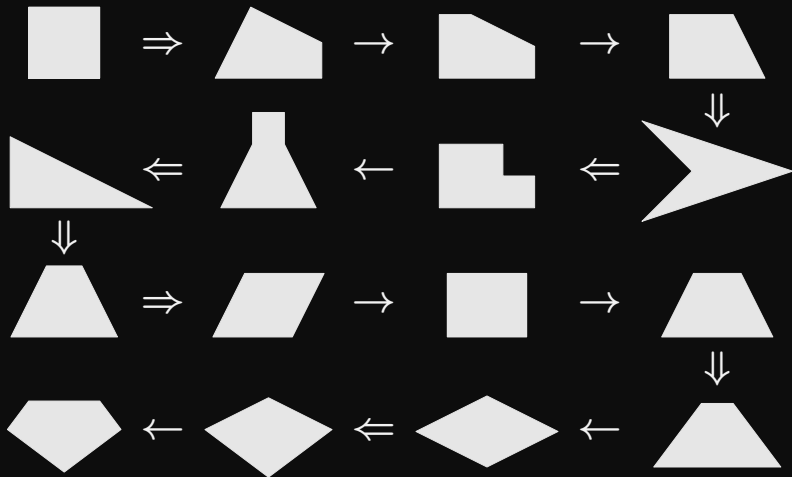
Duck



Crow

Geometric figures

Use all five pieces to make these figures:



Complete the path moving just one or two pieces at a time

Triangles

Could you prove that there are just 10 triangles you can make with one or more pieces of the Egyptian Tangram?

How many solutions could you find for each figure?

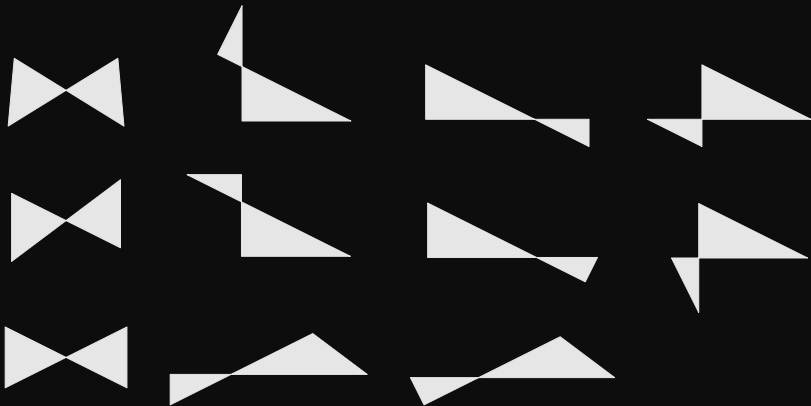


Top row areas: 20, 16, 9, 5, 4, 1

Bottom row areas: 15, 10, 10, 6

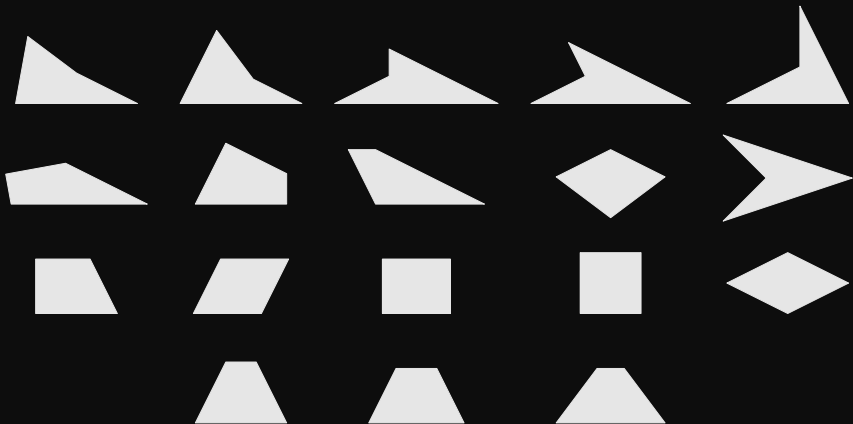
Quadrilaterals

Could you prove that there are just 11 complex quadrilaterals you can make with all five pieces of the Egyptian Tangram?



Quadrilaterals

Simple quadrilaterals: Not self-intersecting

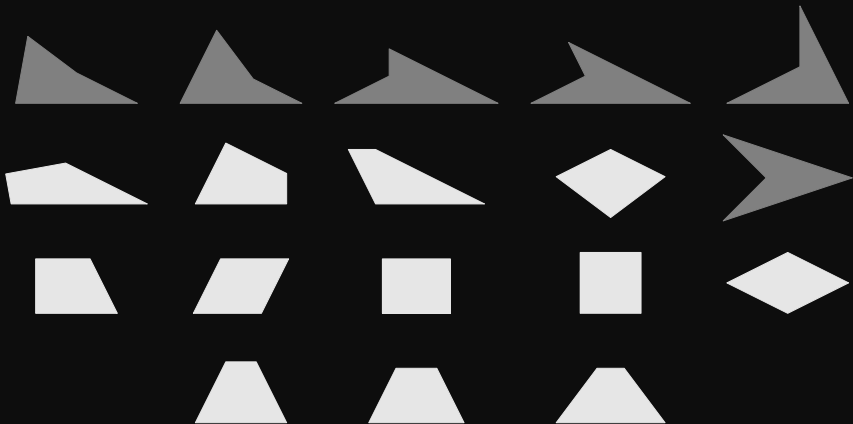


All simple quadrilaterals tile the plane!

$$\alpha + \beta + \gamma + \delta = 2\pi$$

Quadrilaterals

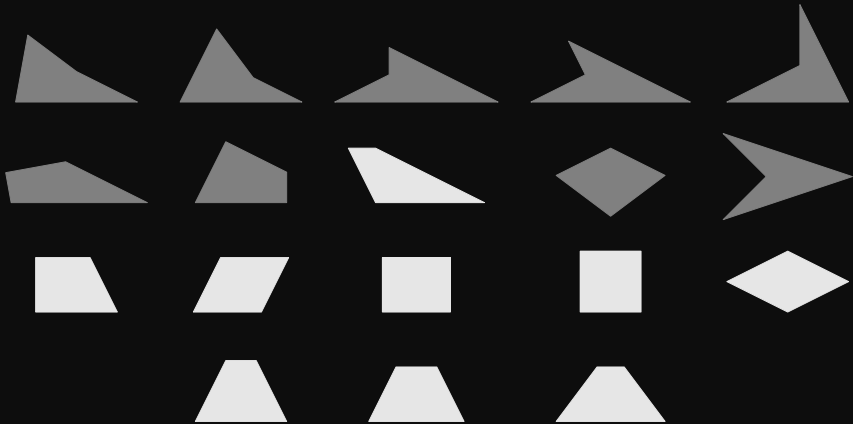
Convex quadrilaterals: All internal angles are smaller than π



Law of Cosines: $p^2q^2 = a^2c^2 + b^2d^2 - 2abcd \cos(\alpha + \gamma)$

Quadrilaterals

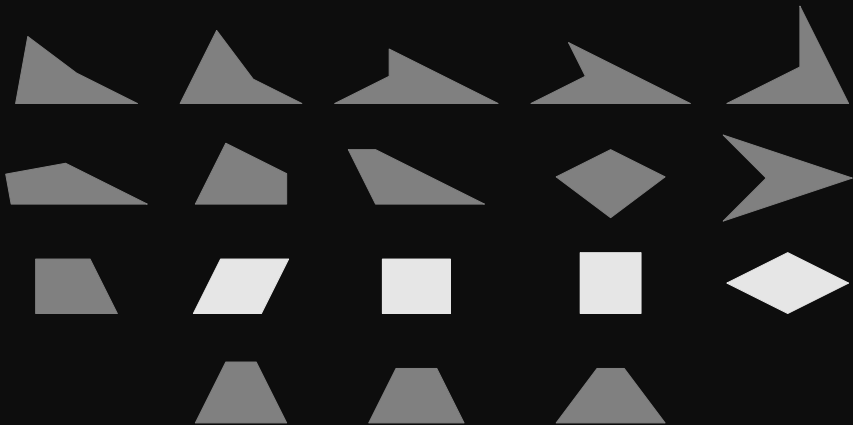
Trapeziums (UK) / Trapezoids (US): One pair of parallel sides



$$2ab + c^2 + d^2 = p^2 + q^2$$

Quadrilaterals

Parallelograms: Two pairs of parallel sides

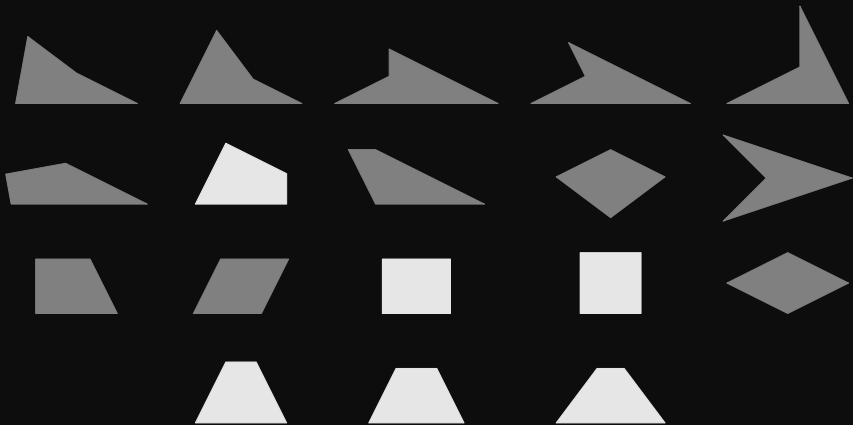


Diagonals bisect each other

$$a^2 + b^2 + c^2 + d^2 = p^2 + q^2$$

Quadrilaterals

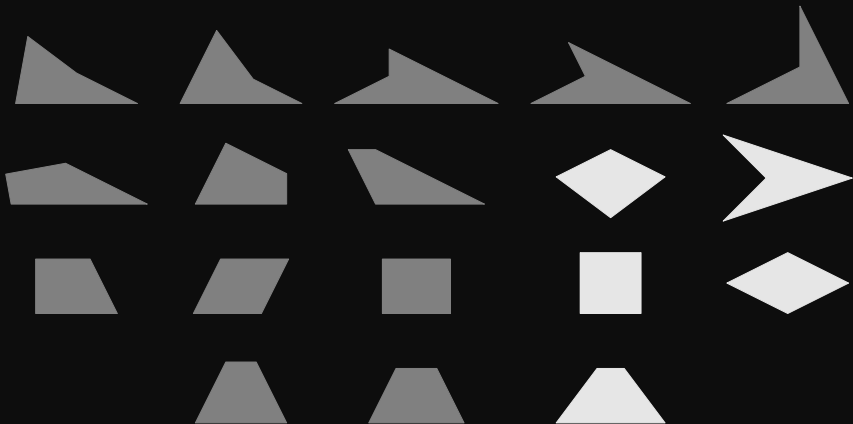
Cyclic quadrilaterals: All vertices lie on a circle



$$\text{Cyclic} \Leftrightarrow \alpha + \gamma = \beta + \delta$$

Quadrilaterals

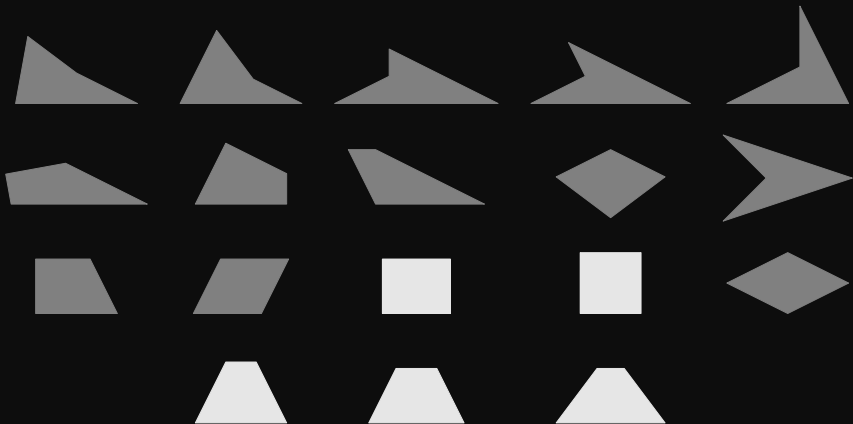
Tangential quadrilaterals: All sides are tangent to a circle



$$\text{Tangential} \Leftrightarrow a + c = b + d$$

Quadrilaterals

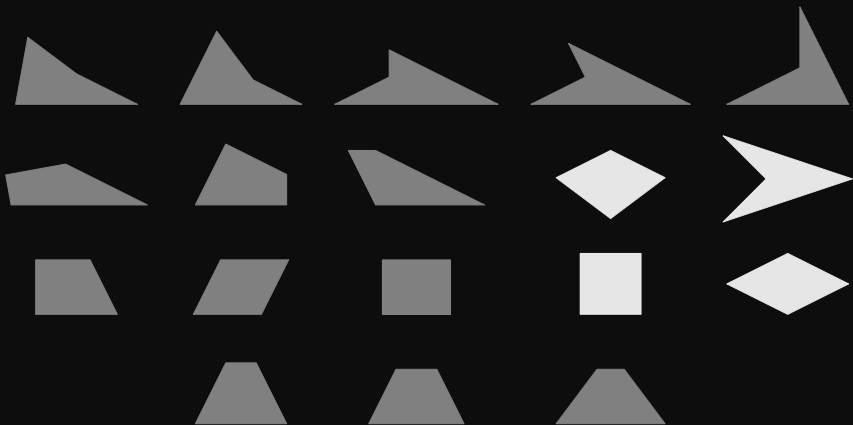
Isosceles Trapezoids: Two pairs of adjacent angles are equal



Isosceles trapezoids \Leftrightarrow Cyclic quadrilaterals with equal diagonals

Quadrilaterals

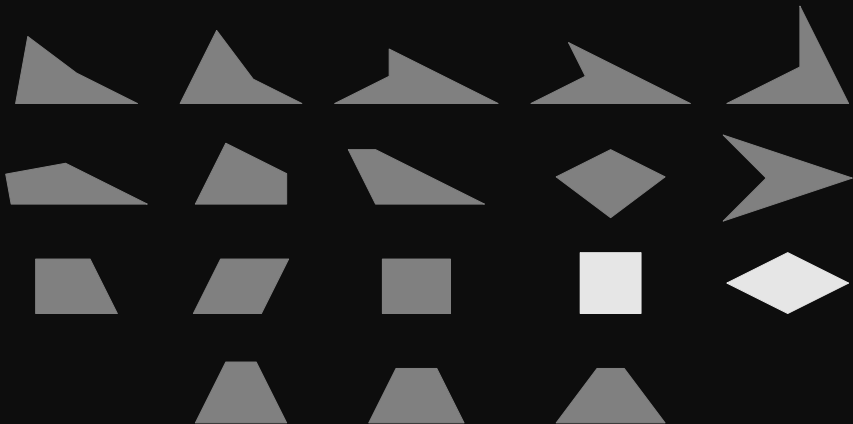
Darts & Kites: Two pairs of adjacent sides are equal



Darts/Kites \Leftrightarrow Tangential quadrilaterals with perpendicular diagonals

Quadrilaterals

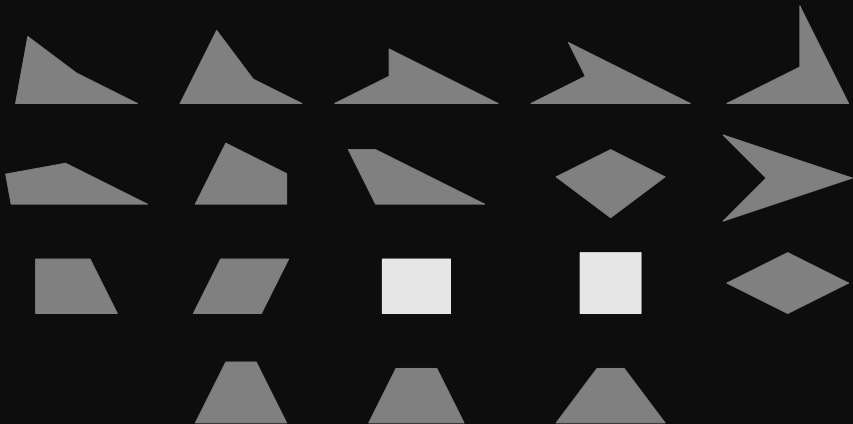
Rhombi: All sides are equal



Rhombi \Leftrightarrow Parallelograms with perpendicular diagonals

Quadrilaterals

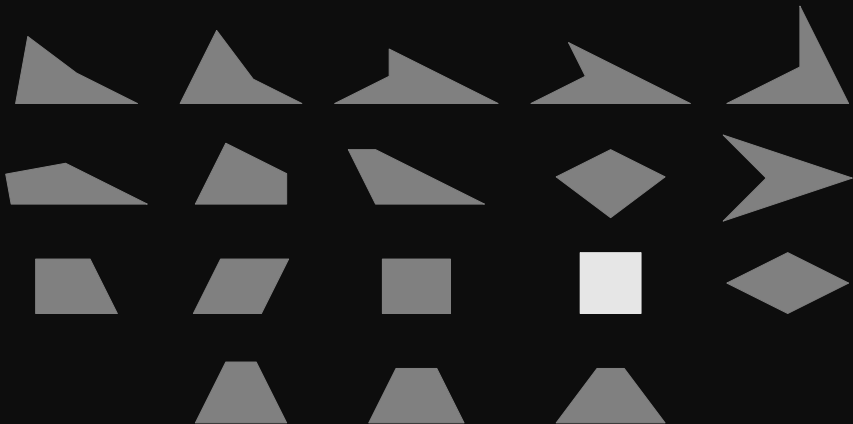
Rectangles: All angles are equal



Rectangles \Leftrightarrow Parallelograms with equal diagonals

Quadrilaterals

Squares: Regular quadrilaterals



Among all quadrilaterals, squares maximize the *Area:Perimeter* ratio

Remote control symbols

Use all five pieces to make these symbols:



Rewind



Play/Pause



FFWD



Start



Stop



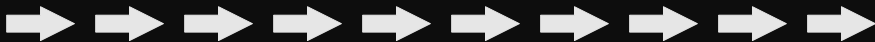
End



Volume

Arrows

Use all five pieces to make any of these arrows:



The three solutions of the square

Could you prove that there are just three different solutions for the square?

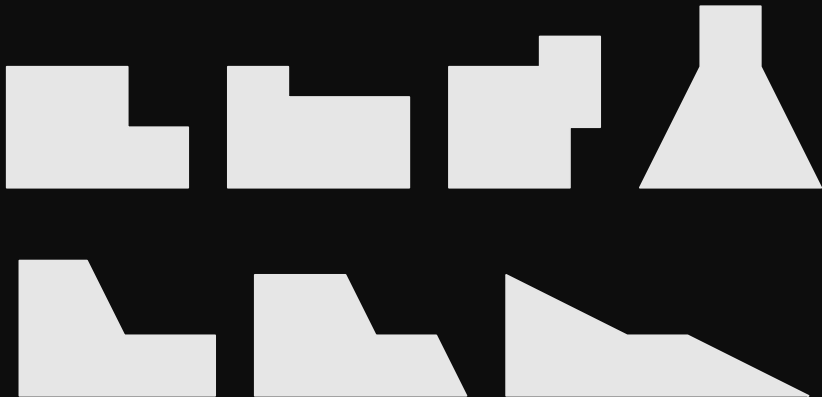


What's the area of this square? What's its perimeter?

How many times do you find $\sqrt{5}$ in the Egyptian Triangle pieces?

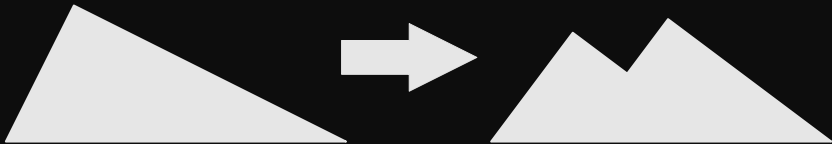
Figures with unique solutions

Could you prove that all these figures have unique solutions?



The triangle paradox!

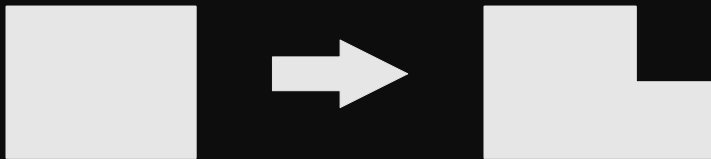
Both figures use all 5 pieces...



Where did the square go?

The rectangle paradox!

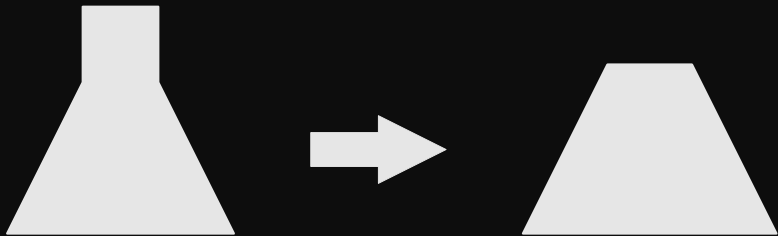
Both figures use all 5 pieces...



Where did the square go?

The Erlenmeyer paradox!

Both figures use all 5 pieces...



Where did the square go?

Sum of similar figures

Use all 5 pieces to make the single figure in the LHS,
then use them to make the two figures on the RHS



In both equations, the figures are similar and areas are in ratio 5 : 4 : 1

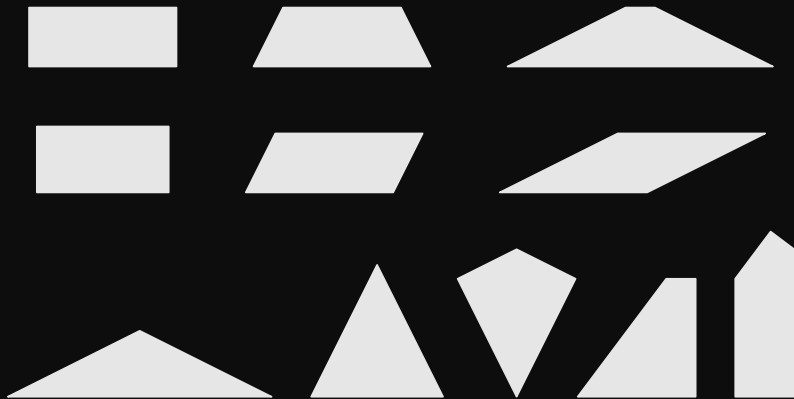
The Egyptian Four-Triangle-Tangram

Make these nine figures using just
the four triangles of the Egyptian Tangram



The Egyptian Three-Triangle-Tangram

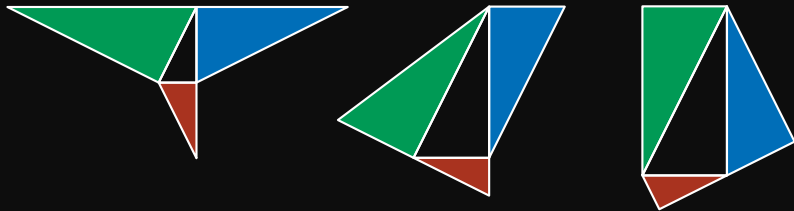
You can make 11 convex figures with T1, T4 & T5:



See: Brügger, G. (1984) "*Three-Triangle-Tangram*", Bit, 24

The Egyptian Three-Triangle-Tangram

Since $\text{area}(T1) + \text{area}(T4) = \text{area}(T5) \dots$



...you can verify three cases of Pythagoras' theorem
(and these particular cases turn out to be T1, T4 & T5 right triangles!)

Mathematical Properties

Golden Rectangle — I

The dashed rectangle proportions are $1:\varphi$



where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Golden Rectangle — II

The dashed rectangle proportions are $1:\varphi$



where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Golden Rectangle — III

The dashed rectangle proportions are $1:\varphi$



where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Golden Rectangle — IV

The dashed rectangles proportions are $1:\varphi$



where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

φ and $\sqrt{5}$ are irrational



This is a golden rectangle, which means that $\frac{\text{base}}{\text{height}} = \varphi$, the golden ratio.

If we remove a square, what remains is also a golden rectangle: $\frac{\text{height}}{\text{base}-\text{height}} = \varphi$

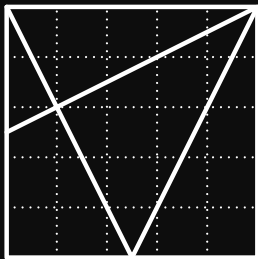
If we assume that $\varphi = \frac{b}{h}$, with b and h coprime integers, then $\varphi = \frac{h}{b-h}$ is an equivalent fraction, with a smaller integer numerator and a smaller integer denominator, which is absurd. Therefore, our initial assumption must be false.

And, since $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is irrational, $2\varphi - 1 = \sqrt{5}$ must be irrational too.



The Egyptian Tangram and the 5×5 grid

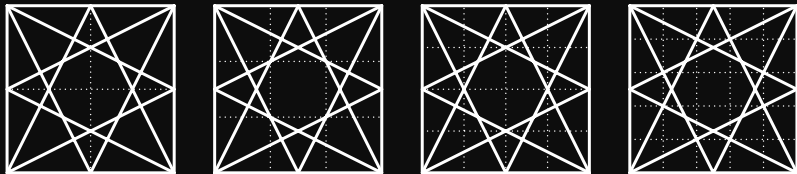
Using the intersection point of the Egyptian Tangram...



...you can divide the square into 5×5 smaller squares!

The underlying grid — I

Using the intersection points of this figure...



...you can divide the square into:

2×2 , 3×3 , 4×4 or 5×5 smaller squares!

The underlying grid — II

The relative sizes of these polygons are...



Small Triangles: 1

Small Kites: 3

Whole Square: 120

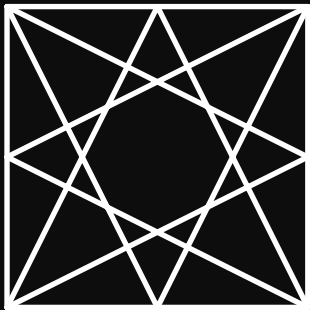
Big Triangles: 6

Big Kites: 8

Octagon: 20

The underlying grid — III

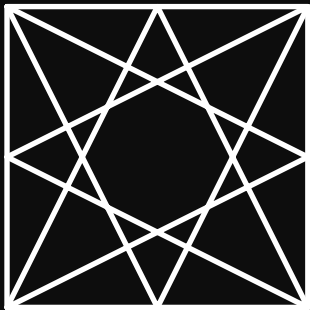
There are 32 egyptian triangles in this figure...



...they come in 4 sizes and there are 8 of each kind.

The underlying grid — IV

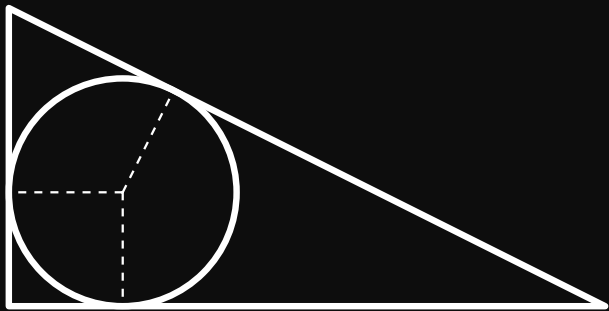
There are 24 $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangles in this figure...



...they come in 3 sizes and there are 8 of each kind.

The $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ incenter and

If the inradius of a $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangle is 1...



...its shorter leg measures $\varphi + 1 = \varphi^2 = \frac{3+\sqrt{5}}{2}$

The 3:4:5 incenter

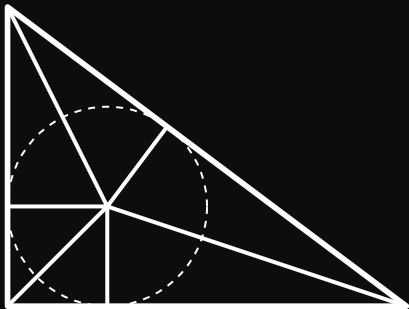
If we overlay T6 and T1 as shown in the figure...



...a T1 vertex lies on the incenter of T6

Dissecting 3:4:5 — I

You can use this dissection of T6 to prove that...

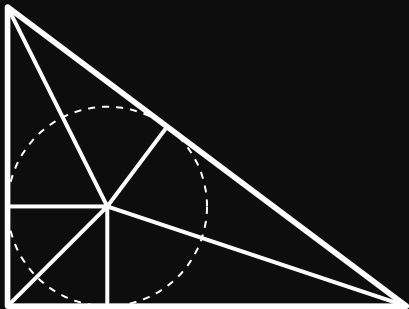


$$\frac{\pi}{2} = \arctan\left(\frac{1}{1}\right) + \arctan\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) + \arctan\left(\frac{1}{3}\right)$$

(consider the sum of the angles touching the vertices of T6 and divide by 2)

Dissecting 3:4:5 — II

You can use this dissection of T6 to prove that...

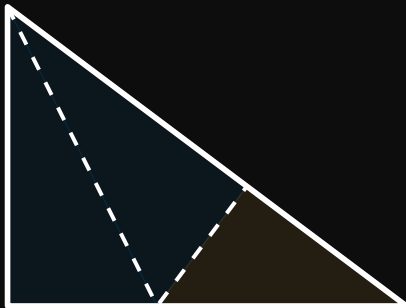


$$\pi = \arctan(1) + \arctan(2) + \arctan(3)$$

(consider the sum of the angles touching the incenter of T6 and divide by 2)

Dissecting 3:4:5 — III

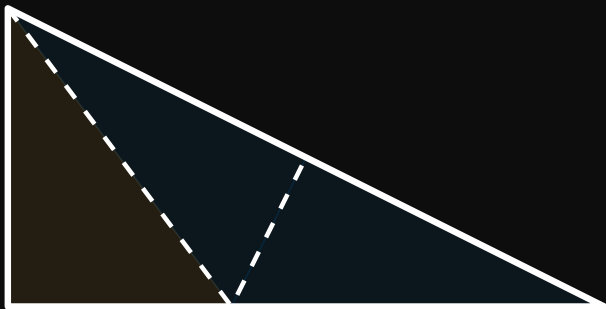
You can dissect a 3:4:5 triangle into...



...a 3:4:5 triangle and
two congruent $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangles

Dissecting $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ — I

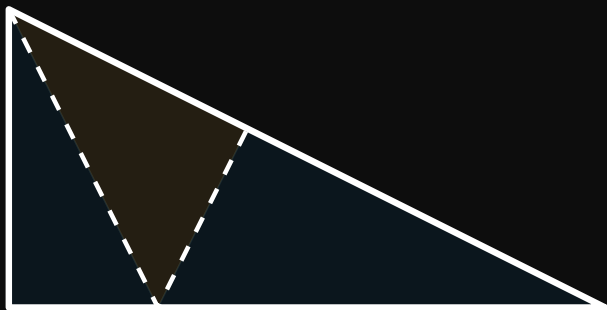
You can dissect a $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangle into...



...a $3:4:5$ triangle and
two congruent $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangles

Dissecting $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ — II

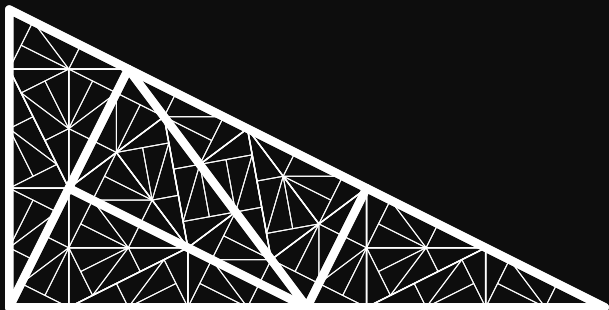
You can dissect a $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangle into...



...a 3:4:5 triangle and
two different $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangles

Dissecting $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ — III

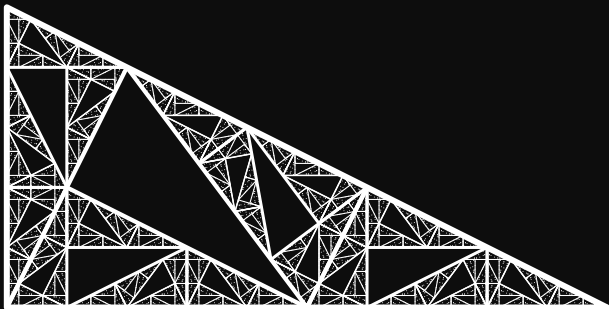
You can assemble a $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangle aggregating...



...five congruent $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangles
and iterate to get the **Pinwheel tiling** of the plane

Dissecting $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ — IV

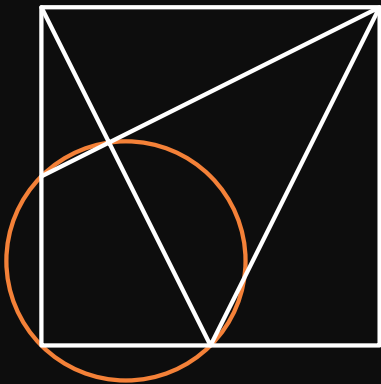
You can dissect a $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangle into...



...five congruent $1:2:\sqrt{5}$ triangles, remove the central one and iterate to get the **Pinwheel fractal**

The circumcircles — I

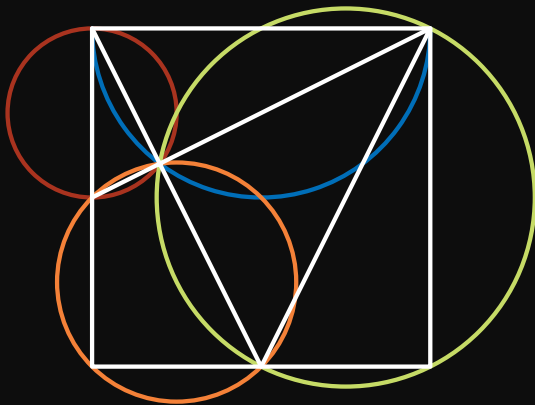
Since opposite angles add to π ...



...Q4 is a cyclic quadrilateral

The circumcircles — II

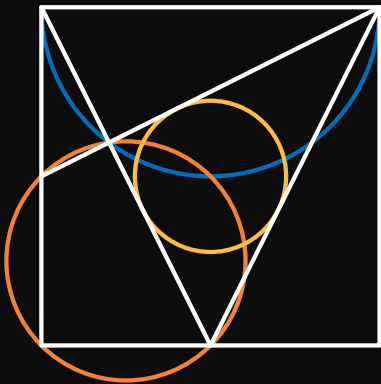
All circumcircles pass through a common point...



...and $C(T_6) = C(T_5)$ passes through the center of $C(Q_4)$ & $C(T_4)$

The circumcircles — III

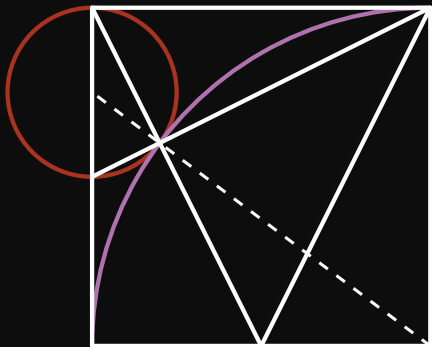
These circumcircles intersect at the square's center...



...which happens to be T6's incenter

Tangent circles — I

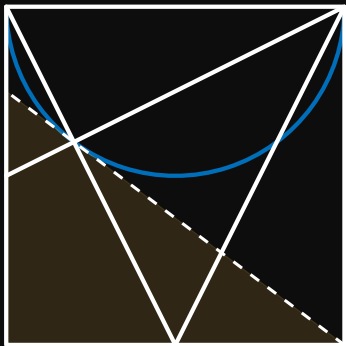
These three points are aligned...



...and these two circles are tangent

Tangent circles — II

The line is tangent to this circle...



...and the right triangle below is an Egyptian Triangle

Tangent circles — III

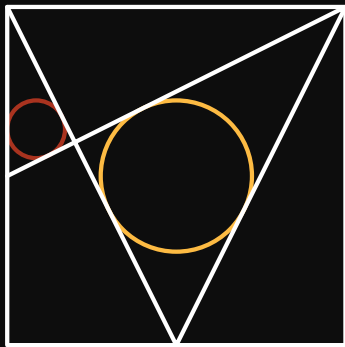
The radius of these three circles are in ratio $1:\varphi:\varphi^2$



where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Tangent circles — IV

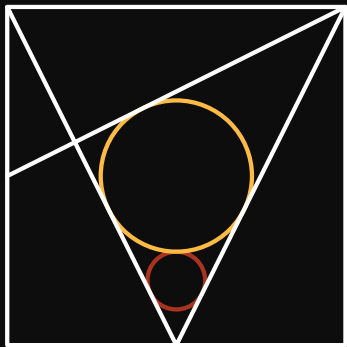
The radius of these two circles are in ratio $1:\varphi^2$



where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Tangent circles — V

The radius of these two circles are in ratio $1:\varphi^2$

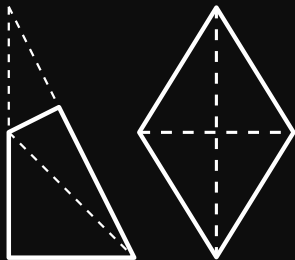


where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Angles of Q4 in the Golden Rhombus

The angles $90 - \alpha$ and $90 + \alpha$ that appear in Q4 also appear in the Golden Rhombus

(a rhombus whose diagonals are in proportion $1 : \varphi$, with $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$)



$$90 + \alpha = 2 \cdot \arctan(\varphi) = \arctan(1) + \arctan(3)$$

$$90 - \alpha = 2 \cdot \arctan\left(\frac{1}{\varphi}\right) = \arctan(2)$$

The faces of the rhombic triacontahedron and the rhombic hexecontahedron are Golden Rhombi

Angles of $Q4 = \text{Angles of } T5 \cup T6$

Even though they are NOT similar figures...



...the same angles appear in $Q4$ and $T5 \cup T6$

φ and the perimeters T1, Q4 & T5 \cup T6

The perimeters of T1, Q4 & T5 \cup T6
are in a geometric progression whose factor is φ



$$\frac{2\sqrt{5} + 4}{\sqrt{5} + 3} = \frac{3\sqrt{5} + 7}{2\sqrt{5} + 4} = \varphi = \frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2}$$

References (by date)

- Brunés, T. – *“The Secrets of Ancient Geometry”* (1967)
- Bankoff, L. & Trigg, C. W. – *“The Ubiquitous 3:4:5 Triangle”* (1974)
- Brügger, G. – *“Three-Triangle-Tangram”* (1984)
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