

THE AZTECS

Learning Objective:

To create an Aztec calendar.

The Aztecs had two different ways of measuring time. One was the farmers' calendar which had 360 days, plus 5 extra days. There was also a holy calendar which was split into thirteen months, each with 20 days. The dates were described as a number and a symbol, such as 'once crocodile' or 'six serpent'. The combination of numbers and symbols repeats every 260 days which is an Aztec holy year.

Here are some of the symbols of Aztec days...



House



Serpent



Rabbit



Water



Monkey



Grass



Eagle



Rain



Flower

The Aztec sunstone, which was discovered in 1760, shows the Aztec understanding of time and space. It shows the 365 day calendar and the 260 day calendar. The centre image is the face of the sun god, and the 4 squares in the first circle represent the 4 previous worlds that the Aztecs believed had been destroyed (just as their world would be one day).

The sunstone is nearly 12 feet wide (about 3.5 metres) and weighs about 24 tonnes.

Have a look at the pictures of the sunstone on the next slide. Some are reproductions of what it might have looked like when it was painted. What images and patterns can you see?







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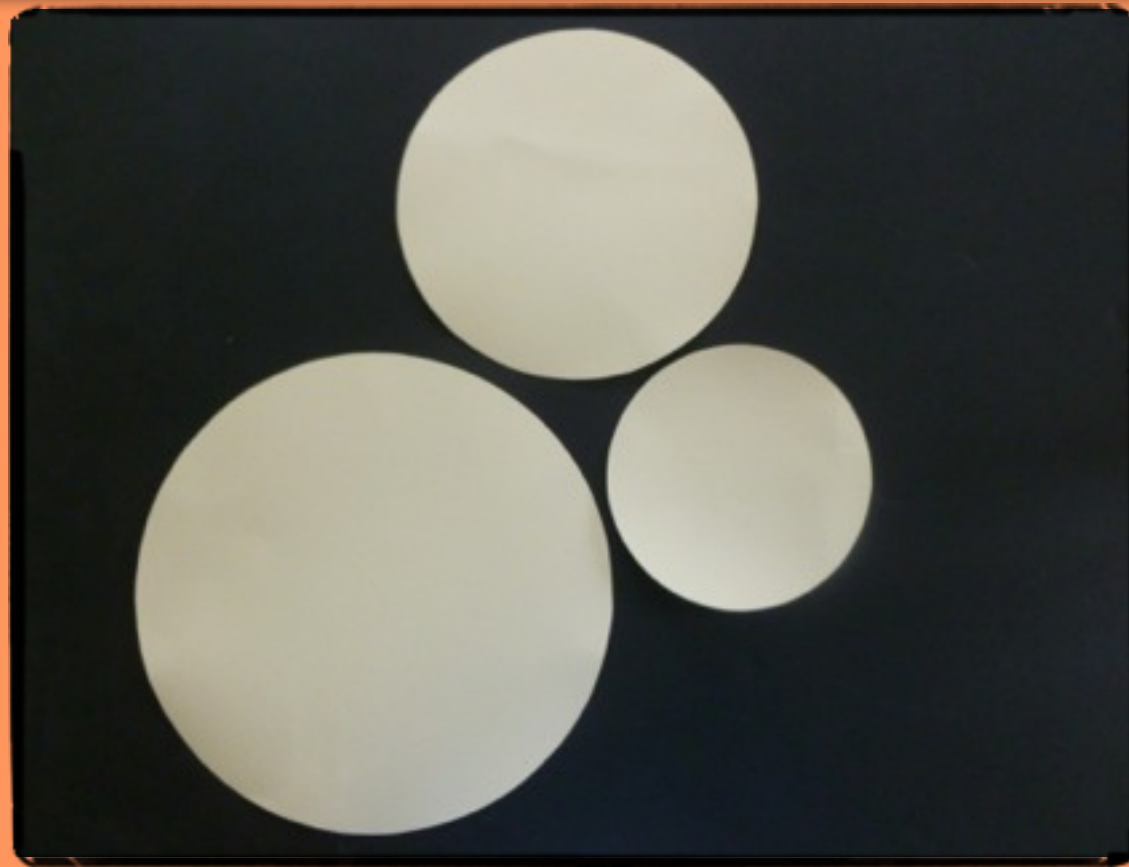


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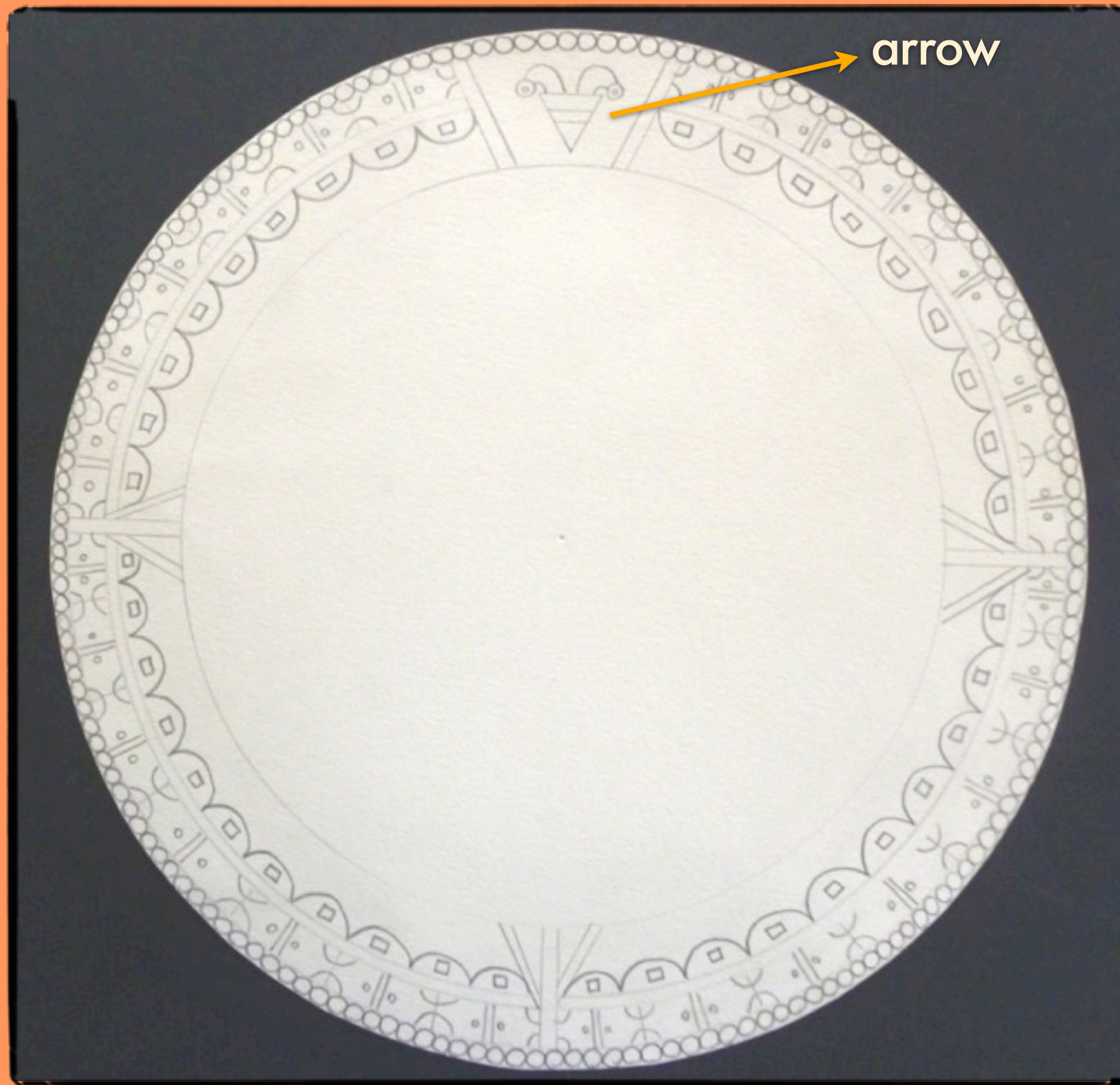
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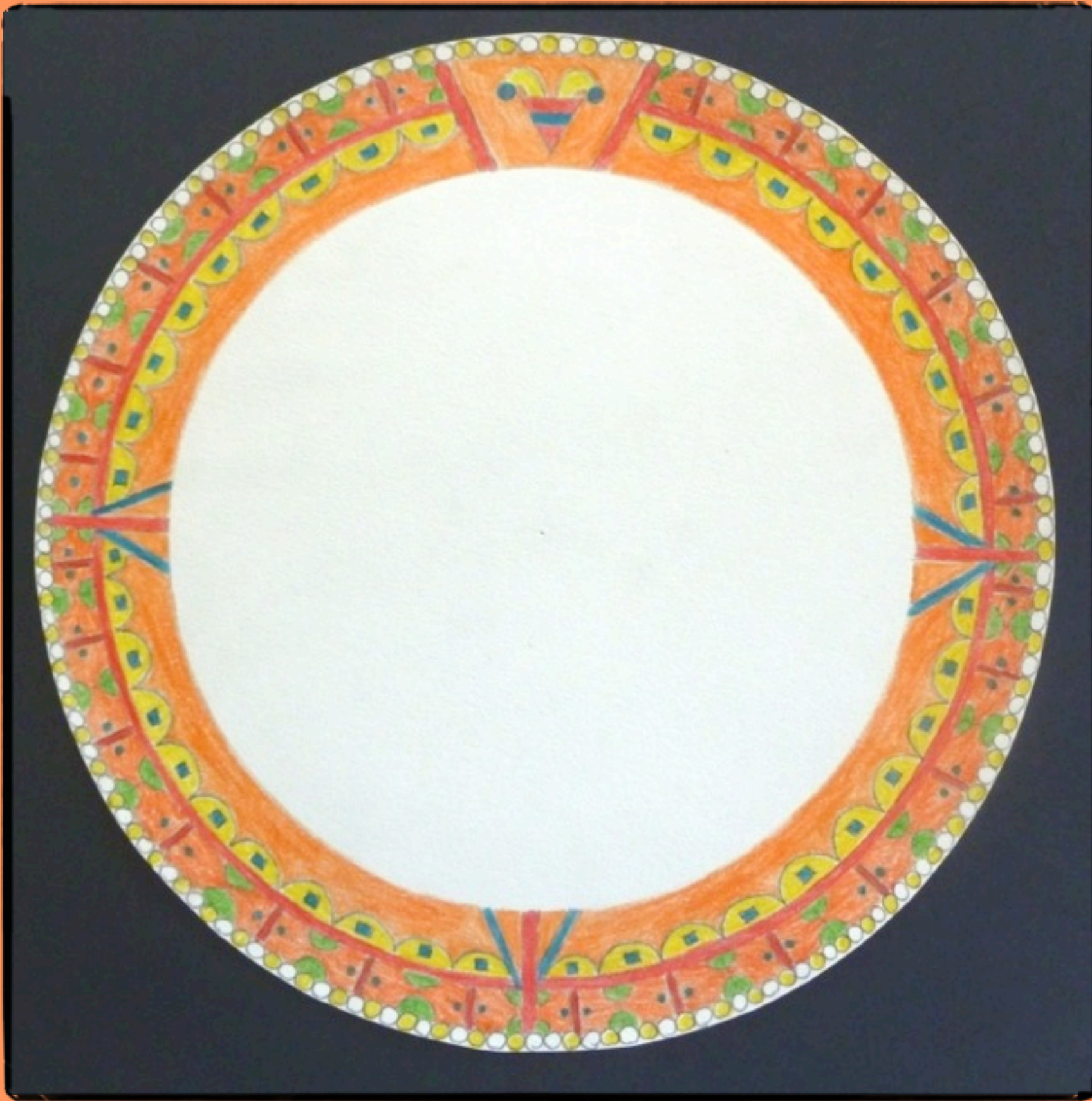
How to make an Aztec calendar



You will need to cut out 3 circles: a large one, a medium one and a small one. Use a compass to draw the circles on card and then cut them out. They will need to be a reasonable size so that you have room for everything you will need to include. These circles have diameters of 26cm, 20cm and 14cm.



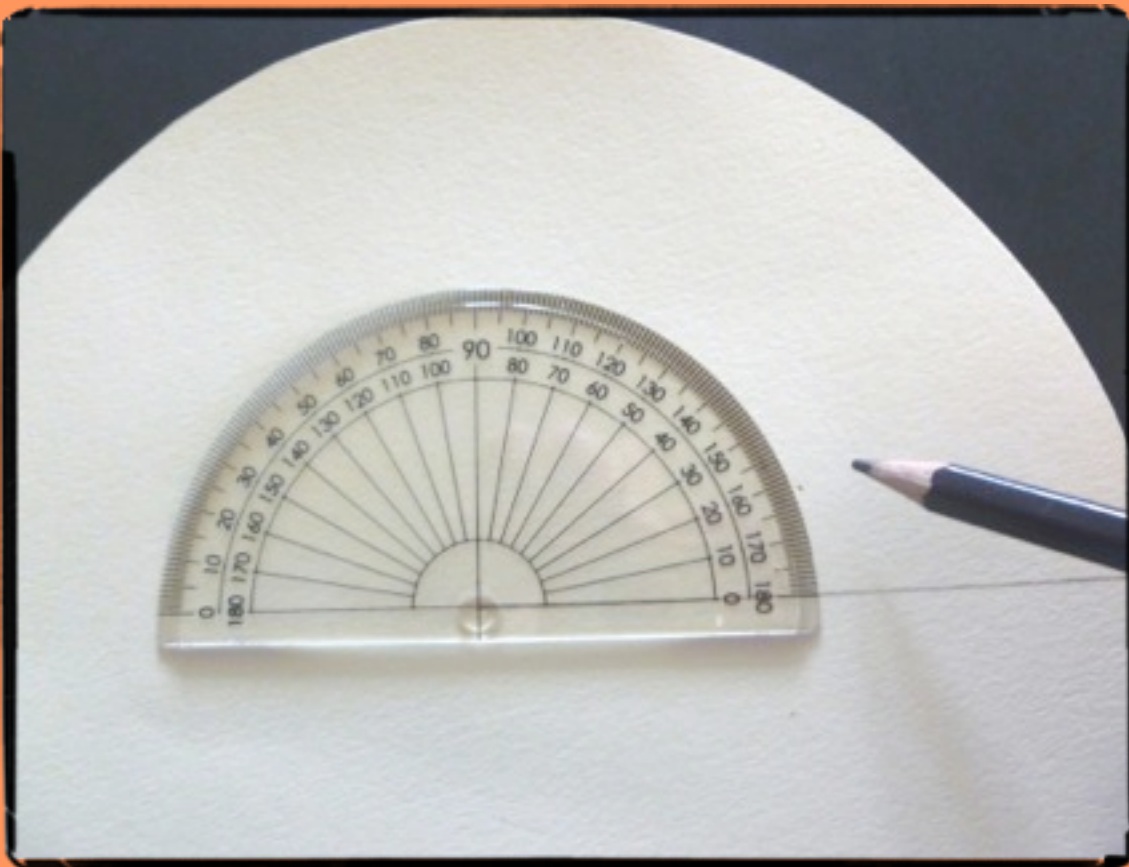
The most important part of the large circle is an arrow at the top. This will point to the numbers and the days. The rest of this circle can be decorated. Use a compass to draw a circle that is as big as the medium circle.



Carefully colour in your pattern. Coloured pencils are best for this as you can colour tricky patterns more accurately than with paint or pastels. Make sure you keep your coloured pencils well sharpened.



Find the middle point of your medium circle. You should be able to find this from the small hole left by the compass. Using a ruler, draw a straight line with a pencil to one edge of the circle.



You need to split this circle into 20 sections, one for each of the 20 days. Use a protractor to measure 18° from the line. Do this from each new line until you have 20 equal sections.



Draw each of the 20 symbols in one of the 20 sections, starting with crocodile and going all the way round to flower. Turn the circle around each time you draw a new symbol so that each symbol you draw is facing upright.



You can then
decorate the rest
of the circle,
leaving the
centre part for
the small circle
(as you did with
the large circle).



On the smallest circle, you need to separate the circle into 13 sections for the 13 numbers. Use your protractor to do this, as you did with the medium circle. You will need to measure 27.7° for each section.



The Aztecs didn't use numbers like we have today. Instead, draw a small circle for each value, starting with 1 and going around clockwise to 13. You can then add decoration to the rest of the circle and colour it in.



When you have finished decorating the smallest circle, you will need to pierce a small hole in the very centre of each of the 3 circles. Place the medium circle on the large one, and the small on the medium. Put a split pin through each hole and fold down the pins at the back to keep the 3 circles together.

You now have a
completed Aztec
calendar!

Have the arrow
pointing at the
crocodile and the
1 to show that
the day is
'1 crocodile'.





Every day, turn each circle one place clockwise to give you the day. The next day will be '2 wind'. The day after that will be '3 house'.

What will the day after that be?