How to calculate the AREA of a polygon feature in a shapefile:

1. In ArcCatalog, select the shapefile that you want to calculate area for.
2. Select the preview tab and then change the view (dropdown at bottom of preview screen) to "table".
3. Under "options", add a new field and title it "Area" with the long integer option.
4. Then, open ArcMap and display the shapefile.
5. Open the editor toolbar and "start editing" with the option to "modify features" in the shapefile you want to calculate area for.
6. Open the attribute table for the shapefile. Right-click on the "area" header at the top of the new field and choose "Calculate Geometry".
7. Select "Area" and "Square Feet" (or other desired units).