

Early Childhood Exploration

WHAT DO I NEED?

aluminum foil
felt, sponge,
or toys



water and
food dye, or
watercolors

spray bottle
or eye
dropper

What do I do?

1. Encourage your child to look at and touch each of the surfaces on the table.
2. Ask early learners questions like how does it feel? Is the felt soft or hard? Which is shinier, the felt or the foil?
3. Help your child drop or spray water onto each surface. Ask: What do you notice? Where does the water go? Together with your child, use eyedroppers and sponges to move water around. Ask: How does the water flow on each surface? What do you notice about its shape?

What's going on?

Very young children (ages 0–4) use these science process skills to explore and understand our world. These skills include categorizing, measuring, predicting, and problem-solving. It's easy to make building science process skills a part of everyday play and routines. Categorize fruits and veggies into color groups at mealtimes. Cut up an image or drawing and use problem-solving skills to fit the pieces back together. Blow bubbles outside to observe (and later predict) which way the wind will take them.

Early learners can draw upon multiple skills simultaneously, using tools and exploration to inform categorization, prediction, and observation. Practicing science process skills early and often is important for children's brain development. Research shows that when children practice science process skills at an early age, they're better able to ask questions, draw and revise conclusions, and identify or replicate patterns later in their development.

Explore

1. What first drew your child's attention in the activity?
2. Asking follow-up questions is important to achieve real understanding. What are some questions you could ask your child to get them to think more about the activity?
3. Encourage real life connections by talking about rain. Where does it come from? Where does it go? Does it disappear in the soil like it does in the sponge? Where does it pool up to make puddles?
4. What are some other simple things you and your child can explore around the house together?