

Encouraging the “scientist” in your child

Science is more than learning a collection of facts and principals. It is a way of asking and answering questions. Inquiry is at its heart. Children are natural scientists. Scientists observe, collect, hypothesize, investigate and test. The child notices something new, wonders what it is, what it is good for and what it will do; pokes it, prods it, tries to take it apart and maybe tastes it; puts it in his pocket and takes it home to study further. Because everything is new to a child, parents have the opportunity to share in the wonder of one discovery after another. What could be more fun? Nurture that spirit of inquiry. Encourage investigation and hypothesizing:

To learn about air, let your child help pump up a ball with a hand pump. Can we see air? No, but we can see the ball filling up with air. Air moves things. You can blow air from your body. What happens if you blow on some flat tissue paper? What if we crumple the tissue into a ball? How about thicker paper? How about a penny? What else can we try?

Collect leaves and compare them. How many points does each have? Are the edges smooth or notched? What color are they?

Rubber ducky floats in the bathtub, but the toy car sinks. What else will float? Let’s try it and see.

Moisten a paper towel. Fold it in half. Place a bean seed in the fold. Put towel with seed inside in a plastic bag, fold side down. Seal the bag and tape it to a window. If the towel gets dry, moisten it again. After several days the seed should sprout. What would happen if we put it in the dark? What if we didn’t moisten the towel? Let’s try it and see.

Will the refrigerator magnets stick to the cabinet door? How about the dishwasher? What else can we try?

Too many children have little or no opportunity to spend time in nature. Encourage your child to explore the natural world. Model an appreciation for its wonders.