



TRAINING MATERIAL

Smelly Balloons

Materials

- Round balloons in different colors
- Variety of flavored extracts
- Balloon pump
- “Match the Scent” poster
- Wet- or dry-erase markers
- Latex caution sign

Notes to the presenter

Before beginning this activity, put a few drops of extract into each balloon. Use a different color balloon for each kind of extract. Blow up the balloons and tie them securely. Give them a shake. *Tip: A hand pump makes it much easier to inflate the balloons.*

Color in the balloons on the ‘Match the Scent’ poster and have visitors write in the scents to play a matching game.

Safety

The balloons are latex. In addition to posting the included sign, you may wish to verbally warn visitors of possible sensitivities or allergies to latex.

Staff training resources

Video: *Smelly Balloons*, vimeo.com/album/3636993

Credits and Rights

This activity is a modified version of the NISE Network’s educational products *Exploring Size—Scented Balloons* and *DIY Nano Smelly Balloons*, available on www.nisenet.org. Photo of biosensor, Raj Mohanty, Boston University.



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Tips for leading hands-on science activities

Greet your guests

Say “hello,” make eye contact, and smile. People will come over if you look welcoming, available, and friendly.

Let them do the activity

As much as possible, let your guests do the hands-on parts of the activity, and let them discover what happens. (If your activity has a surprise, don’t give it away!)

Encourage exploration

Provide positive feedback and assistance when people need it, but let them experiment and learn for themselves. Don’t insist people do things the “right” way—sometimes learning how something doesn’t work is just as valuable as learning how it does work.

Ask questions

Help people observe and think about the activity. Try to use questions that have more than one answer, such as: “What do you see happening?” “Why do you think that happened?” “What surprised you about what you saw?” “Does this remind you of anything you’ve seen before?”

Be a good listener

Be interested in what your guests tell you, and let their curiosity and responses drive your conversation forward.

Share what you know

Use clear, simple language. Focus on one main idea—you don’t need to explain everything at once! Keep the information basic for starters, and share more with interested learners.

Use examples from everyday life

Familiar examples can help explain abstract concepts. Be aware of different abilities, keeping in mind that children do not have the same skills or vocabulary as adults.

Offer positive responses

If people haven’t quite grasped a concept, you might say, “That’s a good guess,” or “Very close, any other ideas?” Never say, “No” or “Wrong.” You can offer hints or suggestions for things to think about or watch carefully.

Share accurate information

If you aren’t sure about something, it’s ok to say, “I don’t know. That’s a great question!” Suggest ways that people can learn more, by trying another activity or looking up information at the library or online.

Remain positive

Maintain an inviting facial expression, positive tone, and open body language throughout the interaction.

Thank your guests

As your interaction ends, suggest other activities that you think your guests might enjoy.

Have fun!

A positive experience will encourage learning.