Activities

Absorbing Experiments

Grades: PreK–K, 1–2

Overview
Children soak up science concepts with sponges, cotton, wax paper, Styrofoam and other materials in this activity.

Objective:
Children will develop science, math, and language skills as they learn about materials that absorb water.
Materials:
- water table or basins
- dry sponges cut into small pieces small plastic blocks
- materials that absorb water, including cotton, washcloths, fabric, tissue, dolls with hair, and paper towels
- materials that do not absorb water including Styrofoam, foil, wax paper, plastic toys, and pencils
- chart paper
- marker

Activity
- Invite a small group to the water table. On a sheet of chart paper, write the question, "Which materials absorb water?" Read the question aloud. Ask if they know what it means to absorb water. Give each child a piece of dry sponge and ask everyone to place the sponge in the water. Invite children to describe what happens to the sponge. Explain that the sponge absorbed water.
- Children can place the wet sponge back in the water so it can absorb more. Then give them a piece of dry sponge. Ask them to compare the weight of the dry sponge with that of the wet sponge. "Which sponge feels heavier? Why?"
- Now give each child a plastic block. Ask everyone to place it in the water. "Does the plastic block absorb water?" Encourage children to explain why the block does not absorb water.
- Give children a variety of absorbent and nonabsorbent materials and ask them to find materials that absorb water. Suggest that they place the absorbent materials in one pile and the nonabsorbent materials in another pile as they complete their investigations. To develop language and vocabulary skills, encourage children to use the words absorb, absorbent, and nonabsorbent when describing the materials.
- Invite children to respond to the question, "Which materials absorb water?" List their responses. Create another chart to list the materials that were nonabsorbent. Keep materials available so children have more opportunities to explore the concepts.

Related Activities: Math

How Much Water Does It Absorb? Provide a plastic measuring cup and a selection of absorbent materials that vary in size. Ask children to get the materials wet then squeeze the water into a
measuring cup to see which absorbed the most. Assist them by reading the measurements and recording the information on a sheet of chart paper. Encourage children to describe what they notice about the different sizes and textures of materials and how much water they absorb. Create a chart to document what they learned.

• Subjects:
  Science, Water, Absorption, Observation