

Tips for turning your house into a science lab for kids

1. Turn bread baking into a delicious lesson in how yeast works. Yeast cells eat sugar, and as the sugars are metabolized by the yeast, carbon dioxide and alcohol are released into the bread dough, making it rise.
2. That worm is good for the garden?! Turn tending to a vegetable garden into a lesson in backyard ecosystems. Ecosystems are critical to keeping our planet in check, with each member of the biological community playing a part. The worms recycle organic material in the soil, increase nutrient availability, allow soil to hold roots better and eventually become food for predators like birds.
3. Minerals, minerals everywhere: what makes up mom's make-up! Teach the science behind shimmery colors and why your skin loves moisturizing lotion. Mica is a mineral widely used in eye shadows, powder, lipstick, and nail polish, and give luster to the makeup. Lotion absorbs into layers of the skin, and how much lotion your skin absorbs depends on many factors, including how hydrated the skin is, and how long you spend applying the lotion.
4. Make filling up the car on the way home a short lesson on how fuel helps a car get you from soccer practice back home. Gasoline is made up of hydrogen and carbon molecules that act as the "food" for a car's engine. A spark in the engine creates mini explosions when it hits the gasoline, which propel the car forward each second. This is the same way an airplane engine works, but on a much bigger scale!
5. Full of energy: teachable moments about why balls bounce and how swinging works make playtime a chance to learn. It's easy to see how the force of a ball hitting the ground puts the same force back onto the ball, causing it to bounce up. Swinging is the work of gravity and energy – just like how a pendulum swings.
6. Why did my white tee turn pink? How did my sweater shrink? Turn laundry time into a textile science lesson. Sometimes, dye is not fully absorbed into fabrics because it's so new, causing the colors to bleed onto other clothes in the wash. During the fabric-making process, fibers are spun and drawn in order to make thread, which stretches them past their natural size. Natural fibers like cotton shrink in warm water because they are returning to their natural size.
7. Float your boat: turn bath time into an experiment and see why some things sink and some float right to the top of the tub. Floating or sinking of an object depends upon its density. Things denser than water (like a penny) sink whereas things having less mass than water (a plastic bottle) will float.