

Science and Nature Activity 2

Ages 3–6

Aquarium in a Bag

PREVIEW: Children use hair gel, food coloring, and gummy fish to make a fun “aquarium” in a plastic sandwich bag. This helps them think about how fish live under water.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT: Following directions, sharing and taking turns, fine motor skills, expanding vocabulary, science concepts

PREPARATION:

1. Gather the supplies from the materials list. Look for inexpensive hair gel. You will need about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of gel for each bag. Calculate the total number of ounces you will need, plus some extra. Prepare for the activity by measuring $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the gel in one small bowl. Experiment to see how much squeezing it takes to put the same amount in the second bowl.
2. Write each child’s name on the edge of a plastic bag with a permanent marker.
3. Think through the steps carefully, trying to anticipate any problems that might arise. Figure out ahead of time how to handle or prevent them. For example, you might keep extra bags on hand in case a bag starts to leak as the child works with it.
4. Plan questions that you could ask, or information you could give, related to this activity. For example, you might ask if any of the children have fish at home. Do the fish live in a bowl or an aquarium? How do they feed and help take care of the fish? Do they know how fish can breathe while they are under water?
5. Cover the work table before beginning the activity. Have the children find a place at the table.

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask the children if they know what an *aquarium* is. Encourage their answers and clarify the concept. Explain that they are going to make their own pretend aquarium in a bag.
2. Help each child squeeze some hair gel into his or her plastic bag. Add a drop or two of blue food coloring.

MATERIALS

- Clear hair gel
- Measuring cup
- Two small bowls
- Blue food coloring
- Small, zipper-type plastic bags
- Permanent marker
- Gummy fish
- Newspapers



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Aquarium in a Bag (continued)

3. Give each child five or six gummy fish to add to the bag. Help them press the extra air out of the bag and *tightly* seal the zipper opening.
4. Tell the children to squeeze the “aquariums” with their fingers. They will see the gel turn blue and the fish wiggle around, and they can feel the texture of the gel through the bag.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Ask older children to predict what might happen if you add yellow food coloring to the blue “water” “aquariums.” Add the yellow food coloring to an extra “aquarium” that you have made. Encourage the children to watch what happens to test their predictions.
- Talk about different places where fish live—ponds, lakes, creeks, rivers, the ocean, and, of course, in aquariums.



CAUTION: This activity uses edible items. Always check with parents for food sensitivities and allergies before serving food or allowing children to handle food.