



Summer is a great time to get outside with your kids and blow some bubbles.

Bubbles have a magical quality that captivates kids and adults. To really have some fun, have your kids roll up their sleeves and whip up a batch of homemade bubbles. Kids of all ages will enjoy mixing bubble recipes and creating bubble wands.

Bubble blowing is fun and it also actually provides some very important developmental benefits. "The mouth is a complex system of muscles and bones and by blowing bubbles, you are working on lip closure and cheek strength," says Stephanie Rice, a teacher specializing in early childhood development and education. "Kids are constantly working on refining their speech, and on their eating and dining skills, so any activity that works on the muscles of the mouth could be beneficial."

When engaging your child in bubble play, emphasize the scientific aspects of making bubble potions and wands, and encourage your child to conduct experiments. Have your child try creating wands from different materials, like pipe cleaners, coat hangers (with sharp edges taped), or a plastic lid with a hole cut out and taped to a chopstick. Let them search for other items around the house that could be used to blow bubbles, such as a fly swatter, a Styrofoam cup with the bottom cut out or one of the green baskets that strawberries come in. Ask your children to guess which of the bubble wands they've collected will make the best bubbles, the biggest bubbles, and the smallest bubbles. Then have them test their hypotheses by experimenting with their different wands.

When blowing bubbles together, point out to your child how the bubbles float away in the direction of the wind. Encourage them to discover the rainbow of colors present in the clear bubbles that they blow. You'll find that making and blowing bubbles can be a great way to wile away a summer afternoon!

Bubbles Bubbles Everywhere!

| BY ROBIN DEROSA LUNDGREN |

Bubble Potion

Here's What You Need...

4 1/2 cups water
1/2 cup dishwashing liquid
(grease cutters like Joy and Dawn work best)
1/2 cup light corn syrup

Directions...

Have your child measure and combine the ingredients in a large bowl or bucket. Have them try blowing bubbles using different items as wands.

Bubble Art

The food coloring in this activity can stain, so this project should only be done outdoors.

Here's What You Need...

Bubble wand of your choice
Bubble solution
2 or 3 different containers
Food coloring
Large sheets of plain, white paper

Directions...

1. Have your child divide the bubble solution between the different containers.
2. Instruct your child to add 5 or 6 drops of food coloring to each container of bubble solution. The more food coloring you use, the more vibrant the colors.
3. Using the bubble wand of choice, blow bubbles of different colors for your child. Have your child catch the bubbles on the sheet of paper, pointing out the patterns the popped bubbles make on the paper.
4. When the bubbles dry, your child can display his or her "Bubble Art."

Variation: To give your child more control over the color and placement of their design, place white paper on the sidewalk or driveway and have your child blow the different colored bubbles directly onto their paper.

This Helps Develop...

This activity can aid in stimulating a child's cognitive skills. This is the mental process of knowing through developing awareness, perception and reasoning. These abilities are strengthened by following multi-step directions, counting the number of food coloring drops and bubbles blown, and also by focusing on the concepts of color and size.

Fine motor skills, the use of small muscle movements in the hands that occur in coordination with eyes, are targeted in this activity. These skills are practiced when preparing the bubble solutions, exploring the bubble wands and bringing the wands to their mouths to blow. Gross motor skills, the movements of the large muscles of the body are engaged when running, jumping and stretching to catch the bubbles on paper.

Language, the expressive ability to communicate ideas and needs, and the receptive ability to understand what is said or written, is enhanced conversations throughout this activity. Parents can encourage language skills by guiding an ongoing narrative during the activity, for example "You ran and jumped to catch that bubble!" or "What colors do you see in the bubble?"

Social emotional development involves a child's feelings of self worth and confidence. This activity is sure to instill pride of accomplishment when making the bubble solutions and experimenting with bubble wands. Even an adult cannot escape the sheer joy of chasing and catching bubbles. ❖

This monthly family activity series, "Hands-on-Kids!" is brought to you by a partnership between the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia (CMNOVA) and FAMILY Magazine. For more activities you can do with your children to spark their love of learning, visit the CMNOVA web site, www.cmnova.org. On their web site you will also find information about the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia and how you can become involved. CMNOVA is committed to building a place where our children can freely explore and develop a lifelong love of learning. Robin DeRosa Lundgren, a CMNOVA volunteer, is Vice President of Aquarian Entertainment and creator of the kids' cooking show "Culinary Kids."