

Ask Me About Magnets!

Today, an instructor from the Discovery Museum in Acton visited my classroom and led a hands-on program about magnets.

I made a magnetic field viewing box out of a clear plastic container, mineral oil, and iron filings. Ask me to show you what the force around a magnet looks like.

I can also do a neat trick using a pencil and my two new magnets.

Let's discover more with the activity below.

Funny Faces

What you need:

- iron filings (ask an adult to help you make filings by cutting steel wool into tiny pieces about 2mm long)
- zip-lock sandwich bag
- stapler
- pencil
- 4"x4" piece of stiff paper (a manila folder cut into quarters works well)
- a magnet



What you do:

1. Draw a face without hair on the piece of paper.
2. Put 2-3 pinches of iron filings into a zip-lock sandwich bag.
3. Place the zip-lock bag over the face and secure it to the paper with two to three staples.
4. Shake up the bag to distribute the filings.
5. Raise the paper off the table by laying the edges over two books.
6. Pull a magnet along the back of the paper to "draw" hair on the face. Try to make beards, bangs, braids, and mustaches!
7. For further exploration: use an assortment of magnets with your "funny face" (bar, ring, button, horseshoe.) Do all magnets make the same patterns in the filings?



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