

Ask Me About Static Electricity!

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

We created all kinds of static electricity with the Van de Graff generator. It really was a hair-raising experience. Let me tell you all about it.

Ask me how we can create static together at home and help me explore static further with the following activities.

That's Attraction!

Two "attractive" projects to continue your exploration of static electricity.

Project 1

What you need:

- a plastic comb
- faucet with running water

What you do:

1. Run a comb repeatedly through dry, clean hair to build up a static charge.
2. Hold the charged comb near, but not touching, a running water faucet.

What do you notice? Do you notice any difference if you run the comb through your hair more times? What happens if the water touches the comb? What materials other than a comb might you use to attract the water?

Project 2

What you need:

- an inflated balloon
- an empty aluminum can

What you do:

1. Lay the can on its side.
2. Rub the balloon against your head at least 20 times to build up an electric charge
3. Without letting go of the balloon or touching it to anything, hold the charged balloon an inch or so from the can.

What happens? Did the can roll away from you. If it didn't roll try charging the balloon again and do the experiment over. Once you have mastered this experiment, challenge a friend, sibling or parent to a game of "tug of can." Have your challenger inflate another balloon, charge it, and see who can keep the can rolling away the most!



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