

ImagineTM Your Story



2020 Summer Reading

15-MINUTE SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

Walking Rainbow

7 clear plastic cups
Paper towels
Red, yellow & blue food coloring
Warm water

1. Place 7 cups in a row and pour water in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th cup. Fuller is better..
2. Add 5 drops of red food coloring to the 1st cup and the 7th cup.
3. Add 5 drops of yellow food coloring to the 3rd cup
4. Add 5 drops of blue food coloring to the 5th cup.
5. Take a half sheet of paper towel and fold it in half lengthwise and in half again lengthwise.
6. Trim off some of the length so that there isn't too much excess paper towel that will stick up in the air between each cup. This will make the water walk more quickly.
7. Place one half of a folded paper towel in the 1st cup and place the other half in the cup next to it. Then another paper towel from 2nd cup and into the 3rd cup. This continues until you have placed the last paper towel that drapes over from the 6th cup to the 7th cup.
8. Stare at the cups and watch what starts happening. You should quickly be able to see the colored water begin to crawl up the paper towel.

What's Happening?

The water moves up the paper towels through a process called capillary action. The paper towel is made from fibers and the water is able to travel through the gaps in the fibers. The gaps in the paper towel act like capillary tubes and pull the water upward. This is what helps water climb from a plant's roots to the leaves at the top of the plant or tree.

The water is able to move upward against gravity because of the attractive forces between the water and the fibers in the paper towel.



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