

Sniffing Around

Finding A Scent Match

Overview: Students differentiate, identify and describe odors contained in canisters. Then, they take an olfactory expedition in the schoolyard.

Materials:

- Film canisters or pill bottles, 1 for each student
- Cotton balls
- Aromatic substances/kitchen spices

Time: 10 – 15 minutes, plus teacher prep time

Action:

Teacher preparation --

- Assemble and clean a class set of containers. Use film canisters, pill bottles, or small jars. Punch holes in the lids and place a cotton ball in each container.
- Arrange containers as pairs. Each pair will have a different scent such as peppermint, lavender -- or a small sliver of onion.

Student activity –

- Each student receives a canister, memorizes the scent and then tries to find the partner scent.
- Once students are paired they decide on a description for their scent.
- Now, take an olfactory expedition in the schoolyard. If you used natural scent items such as pine needles, find the source of these items outside.

Vocabulary: Build a list of student descriptions and include the following words: observation, sense of smell, nostrils, sniff, inhale, odors, aromas, fragrances, scents, odorless, musty, sweet, stinky, earthy, olfactory, similar to...

Management Strategies: Cotton balls will be saturated with a variety of scents such as peppermint, cinnamon, vanilla, oregano, a sliver of onion or garlic, vinegar – or schoolyard scents: damp earth, crushed geranium leaf, pine needles, water, grass, tomato leaf from the school garden.

Caution students to sniff the canisters gently and you should use liquids such as vinegar sparingly as you saturate the cotton. Nobody wants to deeply inhale a pungent odor.

If there is a child who is scent sensitive, make him/her aware of the various scents or only use natural scents.