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The nonprofit educational organization
behind Sesame Street and so much more



Sesame Family Newsletter

June 5, 2009

News and Notes from the Workshop

by Jordan D. Brown

A father encourages his daughter to explore and experiment.

Featuring:

- A Fistful of Oobleck
- Cooking as Chemistry
- Who Are the Creatures in Your Neighborhood?
- This Week on the Street...



This Week on the Street...

Games and videos to enjoy with your little scientist.

- [Fun with Science Playlist](#)
Play and learn science concepts with favorite Sesame pals.
- [Bert's Magnet Trick](#)
Watch Bert experiment with paper clips and a magnet.
- [Bert and Ernie Play the Drums](#)
Experiments in sound.

Sesame on the Web

Do you Hulu? Sesame does!

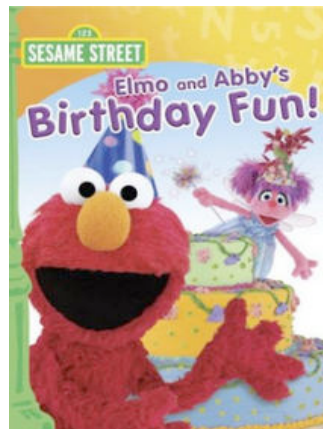
[Visit Sesame Street on Hulu.](#)



Pinky Dinky Doo

[Watch Pinky in 3-D in Season 2 of Pinky Dinky Doo.](#)

Elmo and Abby's Birthday Fun DVD



Join Elmo and Abby as they discover how birthdays are celebrated on Sesame Street and in Fairytaleland.

[Check out the DVD!](#)

[Visit the Sesame Street Store.](#)

A FISTFUL OF OOBLECK

One rainy afternoon last week, my 4-year-old daughter Olivia and I had a blast doing a simple science experiment at home. We whipped up a big batch of "Oobleck" -- a glorious and goopy mix of cornstarch, water, and green food coloring. This slimy concoction, for which I found a recipe in a kids' science book, is named after a magical substance in the Dr. Seuss story "Bartholomew and the Oobleck". What's really fascinating about Oobleck is that sometimes it behaves like a liquid, and other times like a solid. You have to play with the stuff to realize how amazing it is.



[Nurture Your Child's Scientific Curiosity](#)

"Eeeeew!" Olivia squealed, as the green, gooey substance slid off her fingers. "This is really gross, Daddy!" she added, with a giggle. When her hands are almost empty, she shoved them right back in the bowl and grabbed a fresh handful of green goo. With a devilish look in her eye she shouted, "Look at me! I'm a mad scientist -- and I'm gonna getcha!" Laughing heartily, she threatened to dribble Oobleck over my head... but then, sensing I wouldn't be pleased if that really happened, she allowed me to escape by simply giving the secret password ("zucchini").

Amid all the silliness and sliminess, I knew that some wonderful learning was taking place. In addition to building our father-daughter bond, I was seamlessly developing Olivia's intellectual curiosity and interest in science. For example, while we were preparing the Oobleck, I encouraged Olivia to make predictions and observations ("What do you think will happen if we add *five* spoonfuls of water this time?" "What does this stuff look like to you?")

Our homemade creation took on different textures as we played with it, so I asked Olivia, "Why do you think you can roll it into a ball -- and then it oozes off your hand?"

Olivia asked plenty of questions, too: "Does Oobleck work if you use purple food coloring instead of green?" "What would happen if you shampoo your hair with Oobleck?"

My responses were usually "What do *you* think?" or, even better, "Let's find out!" But nurturing creativity does have its limits. For example, when Olivia asked me what could happen if I poured Oobleck on my computer, I instinctively moved my laptop to a distant room in a galaxy far, far away.

Years ago, I read an interesting quote in a book about education written by cultural critic Neil Postman: "Children enter school as question marks, and come out as periods." With this in mind, I try to squelch the urge to always tell my kids "the right answer" when they ask questions. Instead, I prompt them to think of their own answers. By doing so, I help develop their imaginations and confidence -- and, more often than not, learn something new about how they view the world.

If you're inspired to create some Oobleck with your children, do a web search for "Oobleck recipe" or "Oobleck video" and you'll find a list of ingredients, and some tips. (You might even find an amazing video that shows that if you run quickly across a big pool of Oobleck, you can get to the other side without sinking in it.)

How to help preschool scientists explore their surroundings.

[Everyday Science](#)

Simple ways you can encourage young scientists to make their own discoveries.

A LITTLE BIT OF THIS, A LITTLE BIT OF THAT

You don't even need a formal recipe to encourage children to experiment in the kitchen. When Olivia's older brother Finian was 3, he loved to invent his own recipes, while I was busy preparing dinner. What started as a simple mixture of flour and water, gradually became elaborate.

Eventually, his kitchen experimentation resulted in his signature dish: "A Little Bit of This, A Little Bit of That." This crazy concoction involved his adding to a mixing bowl a small amount of a wide assortment of foods: ketchup, apple juice, mustard, strawberry jam, chocolate syrup, dry milk, cinnamon, oregano...just to name a few. Sometimes he poured the mysterious mix into ice cube trays in the freezer. Occasionally he spread it on crackers, and offered it to my wife Ellen and me. When we're feeling brave, we'd try a nibble; other times, it was clear that faking a bite was the wise course of action ("Exactly how much Tabasco sauce did you put in there?!")

I still recall one of Finian's "finest" versions of "A Little Bit of This, A Little Bit of That." Among other things, it contained baking powder, vinegar, and red pepper flakes. The result was a red bubbly mixture that made us cough, and brought tears to our eyes. Then we got tears in our eyes from laughing so hard. Even Finian realized that there was no way we were going to taste it!



[Hands-On Science and Math Activities](#)

When you allow your child to mix, pour, and make things, you are also helping him explore math and science concepts.

[How to Handle Your Child's Questions](#)

Encourage kids to think in creative ways.

[Cookie's Experiment](#)

With your child, watch Cookie Monster's experiment.

WHO ARE THE CREATURES IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

We live in a rural neighborhood, so Olivia and I often spend part of our day together going for a nature walk. Sometimes we have a



destination, but more often, we just wander and wonder. I give her a plastic bag or bucket, and encourage her to gather some "treasures" to bring home, like a colorful leaf, or a weird-looking rock. Years ago, when we lived in an urban community, I often took Finian to public parks to do similar activities. Whether in the country or the city, my children always love finding critters and creatures, from caterpillars to bluebirds. More often than I'd like, they find ticks, too, but that's another story...

During long car drives, Olivia enjoys playing the "Animal Game." In this game, one person thinks of an animal (as specific as possible) and the other person asks yes/no questions to try to guess it. "Does it live in the ocean?" "Does it have fur?" "Does it have arms and legs" "Does it hatch out of eggs?" -- that kind of thing.

Sometimes I deliberately teach Olivia about an unfamiliar animal. Then, a few minutes later, I'll suggest we play the "Animal Game." Olivia gets great joy when she can guess the answer. She might end such as game with a smug, "I've got it, Daddy! It's an anaconda!"

And I'll say, with mock surprise, "What? Now *how* did you know that?" "I just knew it!" she replies.

Jordan D. Brown
Sesame Workshop



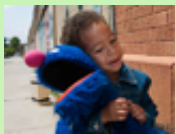
[Science Tips for Families](#)

From taking nature walks to experimenting with food, there are many ways to encourage young scientists.

[A Bee at Work](#)

Watch this video with your child and ask what the bee might be doing. Talk about how bees collect and eat pollen from flowers and use the nectar to make honey.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP



Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization making a meaningful difference in children's lives around the world. Founded in 1968, the Workshop changed television forever with the legendary *Sesame Street*. Today, the Workshop continues to innovate on behalf of children in 120 countries, using its proprietary research methodology to ensure its programs and products are engaging and enriching. Sesame Workshop is behind award-winning programs like *Dragon Tales* and *Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat*, *Pinky Dinky Doo* and ground breaking multimedia productions in South Africa, Egypt and Russia. As a nonprofit, Sesame Workshop puts the proceeds it receives from sales of *Sesame Street*, *Dragon Tales* and *Sagwa* products right back into its educational projects for children around the world. Find the Workshop online at <http://www.sesameworkshop.org>.

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