Curious George: Five Senses

During this lesson, children explore the following science concepts:

• Animals (including humans) interact with the environment through the five senses.
• People use the five senses to gather and record information about the world.

As children go through the activities, they will be using the following science skills:

• Asking questions
• Testing and retesting
• Recording and sharing results
• Identifying and describing sensory observations
• Investigating and identifying using senses indoors and outdoors

Materials

• Bowls of popcorn (3) (one salty, one sweet, one plain)
• Curious George Senses Chart (see Student Handouts)
• Fragrant items and substances (e.g., orange slices, vanilla, cocoa, banana, onion, bubble gum)
• Markers
• Masking tape
• Mystery items (e.g., a wooden block, crumpled paper, ball, marbles, paper clips, spoons, plastic bottle, pennies, doll)
• Plastic containers with lids (e.g., yogurt containers)
• Ribbon
• Scissors
• Socks (at least a dozen)
• Spoon
• Towel

Important Safety Tips:
Please exercise caution in selecting the items for this lesson. Any known allergens or other items of sensitivity and/or dietary restriction should be avoided. Be sure to obtain permission beforehand from parents or guardians.
Preparation

1. Set up three separate tables or areas in the room where children can explore the different senses.

   **Mystery Table #1 (Smell)**
   - Materials: fragrant substances (such as orange slices, vanilla bean, cinnamon stick, banana, onion, and bubble gum), markers, masking tape, plastic containers and lids, and scissors.
   - Cut a small hole in the lid of each container.
   - Place one item in each container. Tape down the lid so it won’t come off.
   - Cover the hole with a piece of masking tape.

   **Mystery Table #2 (Taste)**
   - Materials: bowls (3 large), markers, popcorn.
   - Place one-third of the popcorn in each of the three bowls.
   - Make one bowl of popcorn salty, one sweet, and one plain.
   - Taste the popcorn to be sure the flavors are obvious.

   **Mystery Table #3 (See, Touch, Hear)**
   - Materials: markers, ribbon, socks (at least a dozen), items to explore (i.e., wooden block, doll, ball); items to explore touch (i.e., plastic bottle, spoon, paper clip); items to explore hearing (i.e., crumpled paper, pennies, bell)
   - Put one item inside each sock. Push it down into the sock.
   - Tie the open end of each sock with a ribbon. Line up the socks.

2. Print copies of the Curious George Senses Chart (one for each pair of children.)
3. If possible, elicit family members or older students to supervise each of the Mystery Tables so you can have different pairs working on different senses at the same time.
4. Brief them on how to carry out the activities and instruct them on how to help children talk about the sense they are using to identify the items.

Directions
1. **Introduce the five senses.** Help children understand that our five senses—taste, hear, touch, see, and smell—are like our own personal toolbox that we use to help us learn information about the world. Introduce children to the five senses.

   **Taste:** Have volunteers name kind of food they eat at school and talk about how it tastes. You may need to introduce unfamiliar vocabulary such as sweet like a strawberry or muffin; salty like a cracker or pretzel; bitter (strong and sharp) like parsley or arugula; sour (tart) like lemon or vinegar.
   - Talk about how you taste flavors with your tongue and mouth—along with help from your nose (smell.) *Can you name something that is sweet, sour, salty, or bitter?*

   **Hear:** Have children listen quietly for 30 seconds. Ask, *What did you hear?*
   - Talk about how you use your ears to hear—loud and soft voices, fire alarms, animal sounds, and so on. *Can you describe a sound you heard? Do you know what object made the sound?*

   **Touch:** Have children touch the table and then touch a towel. Ask, *Can you describe how the table feels? The towel? Do they feel the same or different? How?*
   - Talk about how you use your skin to feel things—smooth/rough; hot/cold; sticky/wet.

   **See:** Have children look around. Ask, *Can you describe what you see as you look around?*
   - Talk about how you use your eyes to see things—animal’s movements, words on a page, facial expressions, colors in nature, etc.

   **Smell:** Have volunteers name a familiar smell. *Can you describe the smell? What does it make you think about?*
   - Talk about how your nose smells things that can bring back memories, keep you from eating spoiled food, and even alert you of danger.

2. **Watch the Curious George video, “Oh Deer.”**
   - Before watching the video clip, explain to students that George is taking care of a garden he planted with his friend, Allie. One day he notices that deer are eating the flowers. He asks his friend, Bill to help him find a way to keep the deer away from the garden. They try finding a way to use each of the five senses to keep the deer away, but most of their ideas don’t work. Finally, George finds the solution to his problem when he remembers how the deer didn’t like the taste of his oatmeal.
   - As children watch the video, have them think about why some of George’s ideas don’t work.
   - As children watch George sprinkle the cinnamon around the garden, pause the video and ask, *What sense, besides taste, do you think the deer could use to warn him of*
the cinnamon on the flowers? Why do you think that? Pause as George and Bill celebrate solving the problem of keeping the deer out of the garden and ask, Do you think the deer will stay out of the garden? Why or why not?

• Wrap up the discussion by asking children to share a time when they used one of their senses to find out information about something. (i.e., hear a dog bark; smell a rotten egg; see a branch fall, etc.)

3. Introduce the activity.

• Draw attention to the Mystery Tables. Pair children with a partner and give each pair a Curious George Senses Chart.

• Review the chart and have children identify what sense George is using in each picture. Have children use the chart to record what they experience at the Mystery Tables.

• Explain to children that they will use a different sense to determine what the Mystery Items are at each table.

4. Introduce each mystery table.

• At Mystery Table #1, tell children they will use one of their senses to identify what’s in each container.
  o Demonstrate feeling the container. Then pull up the piece of masking tape and sniff through the hole. Tape up the hole again.
  o Explain how you couldn’t touch the object but could smell it.
  o Explain to children that the next step will be to describe the smell and mark the “smell” column on their chart.

• At Mystery Table #2, tell children they will use another sense to identify the flavor of popcorn in each bowl.
  o Spoon a few pieces of popcorn your hand. Tell children you (or a volunteer) will spoon the popcorn for them. Look at the popcorn and talk about how you can’t determine the flavor with your eyes.
  o Taste the popcorn and eat it slowly.
  o Explain to children that they will describe the taste and then mark the column on their chart.

• At Mystery Table #3, tell children they will use their sense of sight, touch, or sound to figure out what item is in the sock.
• Pick up a sock and model thinking aloud as you look, listen, and touch to try to determine the object. Encourage pairs to think aloud as they are exploring.
• Explain to children that they will describe the sight, touch, or sound and then mark the corresponding column on their chart.

5. **Begin the activity.** If you have others assisting you, send groups of pairs to different tables. If you are directing each table, have two or three pairs work at the same time. While the remaining children are waiting a turn, you may want to:
   • Have them talk with their partner about things they observe while using their sense of taste, smell, sound, sight, or touch.
   • Have nonfiction books on the five senses available for children to look through.
   • Have partners talk about and draw a picture of their favorite/least favorite smell, texture, sound, etc.

6. **Ask questions.** As children explore ask questions (or instruct your volunteers to do so) to reinforce the concept and help children talk about what they are observing. For example,
   • *Can you see the shape/size/color of the object? Can you feel the shape? How can you identify the object?*
   • *What other foods have a salty taste like the popcorn? Sweet taste?*
   • *What does the smell of cocoa remind you of? What have you smelled like it before?*
   • *Try pinching your nose while you taste the popcorn, does it taste the same or different?*

7. **Wrap it up and reflect.** Have pairs share their observations. Post activity charts on the wall and talk about the results. Encourage children to share something they learned by using one (or more) of their senses. *Could you identify a mystery object using more than one sense? What object? What senses did you use? What sense did you use most often? Least often?*

**Home-School Connection**

You may want to distribute additional copies of the “Curious George® Senses Chart” handout for children to take home and continue the exploration at home with their families.
Extend with Games

Children may enjoy playing these games to reinforce their learning and exploration of the five senses.

• “Roller Monkey”
  [http://pbskids.org/curiousgeorge/games/roller_monkey/roller_monkey.html](http://pbskids.org/curiousgeorge/games/roller_monkey/roller_monkey.html)
  Children use their sense of sight as they look for and match color patterns while George and Hundley roll by on different colored roller skates.

• “Cows Don’t Quack!”
  This game is full of crazy noises—cows that quack and dogs that chirp. Children listen to the sounds and straighten them out by connecting the sound with its owner!

Extend with Books

Read these books with children, or encourage them to read themselves, as they continue to learn about the five sense.

  Appealing illustrations and simple text offer an engaging introduction to the senses for preschool children.

  For ages 5 and up, this science book will help children learn about the amazing ways our senses help us understand the world.

• *The Listening Walk* by Paul Showers (HarperCollins, 1993)
  A little girl and her father take a quiet walk together and listen to the sounds around them.

• *Curious George at the Zoo (A Touch and Feel Book)* by H. A. Rey (Houghton Mifflin)
Enticing textures to feel and illustrations to see will make this visit to the zoo with Curious George a fun and interactive ‘trip.’

What part of your body do you use to see, hear, smell, touch, and taste? Look in the mirror and find out as you read about the senses with George and his friends.

Tune in to Curious George® on PBS KIDS® and explore pbskids.org/curiousgeorge and facebook.com/curiousgeorge for online fun and games!

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