UAMN Virtual Early Explorers: Amazing Earth

Sensory Sun Catcher

Mess-free squishy fun for a sunny window!

Materials Needed:

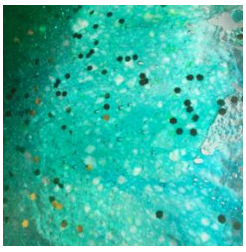
Large ziploc bag, 1 cup hair gel or homemade gel (see below), food coloring, glitter, beads, or other small shiny objects.

*__Homemade gel__: Find three recipes for homemade clear gel here: www.wikihow.com/Make-Hair-Gel (Tip: gelatin-based gel may become watery. Place in fridge overnight to firm it up.) Or use a clear slime recipe: littlebinsforlittlehands.com/how-to-make-clear-slime-recipe/

Instructions:

Step 1: Fill a large clear ziploc bag with 1 cup of clear gel.

Step 2: Add drops of food coloring. Put in glitter, beads, or other shiny objects. Don't mix them together yet!



Step 3: Securely close the bag, pushing out extra air.

Step 4: Tape the top of the bag to a sunny window. Make sure it is firmly attached.

Step 5: Run your fingers over the bag to mix the colors and objects together. Play with the mixture, and observe the way the sun shines through it. What do you see and feel?

Talk about how the Sun shines on Earth. Our planet captures just the right amount of sun to make life possible!

Image from NASA: www.nasa.gov/topics/solarsystem/features/solar_variability.html

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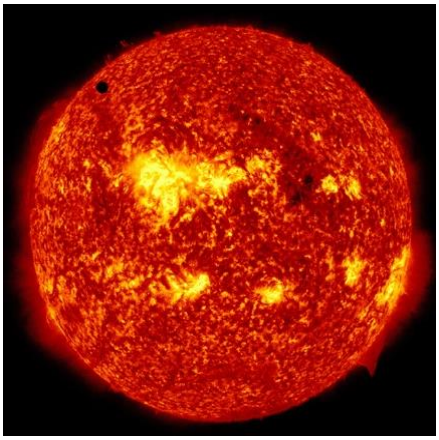
The Sun Is Earth's Star



The Sun, with Venus passing in front.
Image from NASA/SDO:
solarsystem.nasa.gov/resources/476/2012-venus-transit/

The Sun is really big! 1.3 million Earths could fit inside the sun. But it is small compared to other stars in outer space. The Sun is a kind of star called a yellow dwarf.

When a star is born, it has a cloud of dust around it. Planets were formed from that dust clumping and bumping together. With enough gravity, planets cleared the space around them and eventually formed into round spheres.

The planets orbit the Sun because of the Sun's gravity and how fast planets travel. Planets move fast enough not to fall into the sun and slow enough not to travel away from it.

The sun's light and warmth make life possible on Earth! It gives us the energy and the right kind of climate and conditions for life.

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p2.piqsels.com/preview/450/630/479/sunset-father-son-family.jpg

The sun is not alone in the universe. There are at least 100 billion stars in our galaxy, the Milky Way. NASA estimates that the universe contains more than 100 billion galaxies!

The Milky Way. *Image from NASA/JPL: www.jpl.nasa.gov/spaceimages/details.php?id=PIA03239*