

# CURIOSITY AT HOME

## DANCING SALT



*Percussion instruments make sounds by being struck, shaken, or scraped. The percussion family is the largest and oldest instrument family, following the human voice. In music, percussion instruments are used for special effects and mood and to keep the rhythm, or beat. Try this activity to both hear and see percussive sounds in action!*



### MATERIALS

- Large bowl
- Plastic wrap
- Salt
- Tupperware containers with lid (at least two different sizes)
- Pencil or chopstick
- Science notebook or paper
- Something to write with

### PROCEDURE

- Cover bowl with plastic wrap. Be sure to stretch it tightly.
- Sprinkle a pinch of salt in the center of the plastic wrap.
- Position the Tupperware container, with lid in place, next to the bowl without touching it. Hit the lid of the container with the pencil or chopstick.
- Observe the salt. What do you notice happens to the salt when you hit the lid of the container?
- Repeat with a different sized Tupperware container. How does the sound of the other container compare to the first? What do you notice about the movement of the salt?
- What are some different types of sounds you can make using your “drum?” What kinds of sounds make the salt move more or less? What else affects the movement of the salt?

*Experiment continued on next page...*



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### EXPLORE MORE

- Try using a different material instead of salt, such as rice, lentils, or paper confetti. Does it move the same way when you hit the container? In what ways does it move differently?
- Try making your own drum using materials you find around your home. All you need is an empty container or can. Cover the opening of the container with tightly stretched plastic wrap or a balloon (cut off the mouthpiece first). Secure the flexible membrane with tape. Try playing your drum with your hands or by using pencils as mallets. What kinds of sounds can you make? Try using different sized containers. How does the size of the container affect the pitch of the sound? Does covering the flexible membrane with other materials, such as paper, affect the sound?
- Listen to your favorite song. Can you hear the beat? Try playing a percussion instrument of your choice to the beat (remember your body can also be used as a percussive instrument!). Can you make a sound that matches the mood of the song?

### DID YOU KNOW?

When a drum or other percussion instrument is struck, it vibrates air molecules around it, forming sound waves. These sound waves travel through the air. When they reach the plastic wrap, it vibrates causing the salt to move. The sound waves are also what allow you to hear the sound of the pencil hitting the container.

The amount of air inside of a drum or hollow instrument affects its pitch. The larger the drum, the lower the pitch. A drum's pitch also depends on how tight its stretched membrane or drum skin is. If the drum skin is tight, the drum makes a high note; if it is slack, it makes a low note.

*Experiment continued on next page...*



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### 6-8 GRADE EXPLORATION

- Draw a diagram in the boxes below or in your science notebook to explain what is going on when you use more or less pressure to hit the lid of the container. Make sure you include all of the items used for the experiment in your drawing along with labels and descriptions, as needed. Be sure to also include the vibrations of the air molecules, or sound waves, in your diagram.

Hitting the lid of the container with more pressure	Hitting the lid of the container with less pressure

- Try hitting the container with the same amount of pressure, but moving it closer to the salt. What do you notice happens to the movement of the salt as you move closer? Can you use your observations to explain why sounds that are further away sound softer than sounds that are close by?



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