

Time In

Weird science

Turn your kitchen into a laboratory with one of these hands-on kits. By **Melissa Chapman**

School will soon be out for summer, but that doesn't mean your tykes' brains should temporarily turn to mush. Instead, keep little ones learning at home with one of these snazzy science projects. Each provides lots of engaging, messy fun, and manages to sneak in some education, too. My kids, Madison, 9, and Jackson, 5, gave them all a whirl.



Jackson and Madison make their own bubbles.

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Slime Science
The kids relished sinking their hands into this kit's "ooey, gooey sewer slime" and "wiggly wonder" putty. Measuring the ingredients thrilled them, and they listened attentively as I read the instructions, which explained the science behind the slick and sticky fun. Just be forewarned: Mixing the slime requires great focus, so close adult supervision is required. **Jackson** "Can I slime you, Mommy?" \$15; at amazon.com



Lab in a Bag: Test Tube Wonders
Madison and Jackson were giddy creating snow, growing colored crystals and watching a toy dinosaur expand. The "miracles" are due to polyacrylamide crystals (the stuff in disposable diapers). Often impatient, my kids appreciated the instantaneous transformations. The only downside? My five-year-old kept licking the snow. **Madison** "This must be what it feels like to be God." \$18; at beamazing.com



Water Splash
Make sure to use this kit over the bathtub—it involves lots of water. Madison enjoyed using a water drop as a magnifier and turning a sponge into a model rain cloud. But the kit didn't tickle Jackson, who got so wet he had to change his clothes. Helpful hint: Don't start before finding a bowl big enough to hold a one-liter bottle. **Madison** "You can do so many cool things with water. I thought it was just for drinking and showers." \$15; at kidsciencekits.com



Bubble Science
The educational goal here was to learn why adding hot water to soap makes a lather. But my kids' true joy stemmed not from learning but from crafting some cool effects, like a two-foot-long bubble. Alas, mixing the bubble potions wasn't my children's forte: While I added the ingredients, they watched and waited. **Jackson** "I want to make bubbles, but they keep popping!" \$35; at thamesandkosmos.com



Disgusting Science
These experiments illustrate digestion, mucus production and other bodily processes by guiding kids to complete simple simulations with gelatin. Madison found the topic a bit "icky," but Jackson thought the results were super cool. His interest did wane for bacterial growth on a petri dish, which took days to complete. **Jackson** "These experiments look so gross. I love them." \$20; at amazon.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: (TOP) MELISSA CHAPMAN; (STILL) CAROLINE VONGEN NELSON