

SCRUB A DUB DUB

AGES

Children 4+ years

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Oil spill sensory play! Discuss pollution and demonstrate an “oil spill,” followed by a cleanup effort to clear the polluted water. This is a great way to show how our actions affect the environment, including animal habitats. Another activity demonstrates how polar bears stay warm in water. Children stick their bare fingers in ice water, then dip their fingers again after coating them in Crisco. Discuss how blubber keeps polar bears warm.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

For the ocean sensory bin, you will need:

- One plastic tub filled with water
- Plastic aquatic animals, seashells, and toy boats
- Cocoa powder
- Cooking oil
- Small jars or bottles for sample
- Coffee grounds (optional)
- Shredded plastic (optional)

During the program, take a sample of the clean water. Add toy boats and cocoa powder mixed with oil. You can also add coffee grounds and shreds of plastic for more gritty water. Compare a sample of the dirty water with the clean water.



Image source: Shutterstock

ADAPTATION:

If you live near water, consider a field trip!

TIP:

For older children, show some examples of ingenious environmental cleanup: <https://bit.ly/2z91Fin>

For the “oil spill” cleanup, you will need:

- One plastic tub filled with clean water
- Latex gloves (one pair per child)
- Cotton balls and sponges
- Toothbrushes and soap
- Coffee filters

Children try to extract the oils from the sensory bin. Untangle the animals and scrub them with toothbrushes and soap over a bin of clean water. If you used coffee grounds, you can also filter the water using a coffee filter. Afterwards, the sample bottle from the filtered water will show that messes we leave can make irreversible damage to aquatic habitats (i.e., the water is still not clear).

UNIQUE SPACE AND PERSONNEL NEEDS

This potentially messy program is a good one to take outdoors.

RESOURCES

Books

Picture Books

Hey, Water! by Antoinette Portis (2019) (NF)

I Can Save the Ocean! (2010) by Alison Inches and Viviana Garofoli (NF)

If Polar Bears Disappeared (2018) by Lily Williams (NF)

Save the Arctic (2019) by Bethany Stahl (NF)

The Pout-Pout Fish Cleans Up the Ocean (2019) by Deborah Diesen and Dan Hanna (F)

Save the Ocean (2019) by Bethany Stahl (NF)

Sea Bear: A Journey for Survival (2019) by Lindsay Moore (NF)

What’s That Noise? (2020) by Naomi Howarth (F)

Early Readers

Mr. Popper’s Penguins (1938) by Richard Atwater and Florence Atwater (F)

River Rescue (2019) by Jennifer Keats Curtis and Tammy Yee (NF)

What a Waste (2019) by Jess French (NF)

TIP:

In case of latex allergies, purchase vinyl gloves for children to wear.

TIP:

See also Chapter 06: Preschool for more water sensory bin ideas.