Your Nose Knows! Have Fun with Smell Science

Kids intuitively use their five senses (sight, smell, touch, sound, and taste) to learn about the world around them. In kindergarten, the senses are also an early science topic. Exploring the senses in a scientific way helps kids begin to build the lifelong skills of making observations and drawing conclusions. With this experiment, your kindergartener will give her nose a workout by using her sense of smell to examine objects and find the matching scents.

What You Need:

- 8–10 small airtight containers (You need two canisters per scent. Film canisters are great if you can get them, but small Tupperware containers, envelopes, or even boxes also work well.)
- Cotton balls
- 4–5 scents or fragrances such as perfume or cologne, vanilla flavoring, lemon juice, baby powder, cinnamon, onion powder, and almond flavoring (Be creative!)
- Pencil
- Blank paper

What You Do:

1. Number the canisters from 1–8 or 1–10.
2. Soak two cotton balls in each scent, and place each in its own container. Be sure to mix them up!
3. Ask your child to sniff the contents of the first container.
4. Explain to her that each container has a matching "scent twin" and her job is to use her sense of smell to match the scents.
5. Label the blank paper with the heading "Matching Pairs."
6. Have your child start sniffing and pairing up the matching scents. Remind her to take a big whiff as she sniffs each container.
7. Help her record her findings on the recording sheet by writing down which containers are matching twins. Can she find the matches for all of the scents? For an added challenge, see if she can identify each scent.
8. When all the scents are paired, discuss the results of the experiment. How could she tell which scent matched with another? Which scents were most similar, and which were most different?

Extend the experiment by having some fun with another "test subject" such as a relative or friend. Which scents are the hardest to pin down? Who's got an especially "knowing" nose?