

Simple Machines at Home

Simple machines make our lives easier – we know this but we aren't always aware of how they help us. Give your budding young observers a chance to find simple machines at use in your home.

What You Need:

- Paper
- Pencil

What You Do:

1. Fold your paper in half and then in half again so that when you open it you have four sections. Now label each section with the four categories of simple machines: pulley, lever, wedge, wheel and axle. Make one scorecard per child.
2. Explain that this is a scientific scavenger hunt to uncover simple machines in your home. Review the simple machines.
 - Pulley: a grooved wheel that holds a line, used to raise heavy objects.
 - Lever: a rigid bar used with a fulcrum to lift an object.
 - Wedge: a sloping surface.
 - Wheel and axle: a bar which rotates along with a pair of wheels.
3. Remind your child that some tools consist of one simple machine (nail = wedge) while others combine two or more (wheelbarrow = lever + wheel and axle).
4. Give each child a scorecard to record their finds and a pencil.
5. Let the hunt begin.
6. If one child lags, help him out with a few hints. Here are a few of the most common places to find simple machines in the home:
 - Pulley: blinds, garage doors, flag poles
 - Lever: see saw, pry bar, lever action door latches
 - Wedge: scissors, screw, a knife.
 - Wheel and axle: office chairs, carts, wheeled carry-on luggage and toy cars.

If you have a group of kids playing together, create prizes for the most simple machines found, for example: the most in one category (wedges vs levers), for finding one of each (pulley, lever, inclined plane, wheel & axle), or for identifying one or more complex machines that include two or more simple machines.

