

Make a Sundial

How do you tell time without a watch? Use the sun! The sun can be an accurate time telling device as long as you have the tools to help you. Many ancient peoples used sundials to keep track of time. The earliest sundials we know of are the shadow clocks (circa 1500 BC) that were used in Egyptian and Babylonian astronomy. Show your child how people were able to tell time long before analog, and then digital clocks, appeared on the scene.

What You Need:

- Straight stick about 2 feet long
- Pebbles or small sea shells
- Watch

What You Do:

1. Find a sunny spot and push the stick straight into the grass or earth. If your backyard doesn't have any grass or earth, fill a small bucket with sand and place your stick into the bucket.
2. Start in the morning when the sun is up. At 7:00 am use a pebble to mark where the shadow of your stick falls. Come back at 8:00am, 9:00am, 10:00am, and so on until there is no more daylight in the day. You may want to mark your pebbles with the time they were placed using chalk.
3. By the end of the day your sundial will be complete. The next time your kid asks what time it is (and the sun is out) point him in the direction of the sundial.



Did You Know?

- The length of the shadows will change throughout the year. In the summer the shadows are shorter and the winter the shadows are longer.
- The term A.M. stands for "ante meridiem." which means before noon. P.M. stands for "post meridiem" or afternoon. Noon is the time when the sun is at its highest point in the sky.
- On a cloudy day you'll be happy to have a digital clock, but a digital clock doesn't give you any clues about the seasons, so both time-telling tools have their uses!