

Make Your Own Cloud!

What is a cloud exactly? We look at them every day, but few of us realize what they are made of.

In a nutshell, clouds are collections of tiny water droplets, formed when the warm air that is being heated by the sun's rays meets the cold, damp air coming up off the cold ground. Little water drops form into clouds. The water drops are so small and light that they can float in the air. When enough water droplets have gathered together, they get too heavy to float and fall down as rain.

Okay, so now you know how to explain clouds in plain English. But as they say, a picture's worth a thousand words. Rather than *tell* your kids how clouds are formed when warm and cold air meet, *show* them. Here's a way for kids to see it all up close! As cool as it might seem for an independent project, don't let your kids do this experiment alone. There's a match involved, so a grownup is imperative.

What You Need:

- Glass jar
- Piece of black paper but to fit halfway up around the jar
- Tape
- Hot tap water
- Match
- Ice cubes in a plastic bag

What You Do:

Tape the piece of black paper around the bottom half of the jar. Fill the jar to the top with hot water. Leave it for about a minute. Then pour out all but an inch of the water.

Have an adult light the match and hold it over the jar opening for a few seconds. Drop the match in the water. Then quickly put the plastic bag of ice cubes over the top of the jar.

Questions to ask your child:

What happened to the air in the jar?

What did the ice cubes do?

What else did you notice?

So what happened? The warm water and the match heated the air inside the jar. The warm, wet air rose up to the top of the jar and ran into the cold air just below the ice cubes. When the warm, wet air met the cold wet air, they created a cloud of water droplets. Instant cloud!



Author: Maxine Anderson

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