

# Computers & Kids

COMPUTER  
EXPLORERS

# NEWS

September 2008

## Balloons Offer More Than Just Hot Air!

While hot air balloons have continued to take science and discovery to the limit since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a simple latex balloon can offer preschool-aged children an endless afternoon of homemade science fun. Once children have outgrown the fixations that prompt them to put things in their mouth, latex balloons are safe for supervised play.

### Balloons teach children about the power of air!

First, blow up a balloon and let the air out in a way that your children can see the air in action. Let the air blow a peace of cotton, a tissue, or your child's hair. Next, show children how to make a high-pitched orchestra by showing them how escaping air makes noise by pulling the balloon's opening tight.

**Take at-home science to the next level** by counting the hours or days it takes for different balloons to shrink or come off the ceiling. For more great ideas on the balloon theme, including art, songs, books, and games visit the Everything Preschool site ([www.everythingpreschool.com/themes/balloons/](http://www.everythingpreschool.com/themes/balloons/)).

**Indian summer and no plans for cooling off?** Let children fill up water balloons and practice tossing and catching until participants are soaked and having continued summer fun! (See <http://www.universalpreschool.com/how-to/summer-learning-fun.asp> for fun ideas!)

**Make a bigger connection** for your child by explaining how hot air balloons work (see How Stuff Works for older children). Consider making a miniature hot air balloon pinata using a household balloon as the base for decorating and a berry basket for passengers. Find instructions at Preschool Education ([www.preschooleducation.com/atransportation.shtml](http://www.preschooleducation.com/atransportation.shtml))



Older children who are curious about hot air balloons or other science-oriented projects should bookmark the **How Stuff Works** site at <http://science.howstuffworks.com/hot-air-balloon.htm>. Beyond science, this site presents a number of categories such as money, people, food, and auto from a fresh perspective that is sure to keep curious children learning useful information.

## Buckleitner Box

Dear Parents,

It's amazing how the future sometimes snaps into focus. Like tea leaves, the 76 new products that we reviewed in the past 30 days form a pattern that provides an image of how our children's futures will be affected by technology.

This fall, a high school student can fill in the dots on a virtual SAT test on a Nintendo DS, with FutureU or MySAT Coach. The same student could relax with a game of Spore on their iPhone. At school, that student might pull out his/her wireless tablet computer and sign into a web-delivered, individualized curriculum over the school's wireless network. In the meantime, parents at home are finding an increasing number of FREE sites, such as Professor Garfield ([www.professorgarfield.org](http://www.professorgarfield.org)), to extend the school curriculum with quality content. After school, there is no more vegging out in front of the TV, which has grown into a high-definition 1080p computer monitor displaying with Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution. After studying, students might take on their parents in Hasbro's Family Game Night (Wii and PS2), a title that brings traditional board games, like BattleShip, to life. After many years of software watching, it's fun to see the future start to happen.

Warren Buckleitner, Ph.D.  
Editor, Children's Technology Review