

ELF NOTES

Environmental Learning for the Future - Vermont Institute of Natural Science
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RISING ON AIR

When the sun warms the earth's surface it warms the air close to it. Warm air rises. Rising air can lift and carry things as it moves. Experiment to see this happen.

Cut a spiral out of a piece of paper. Balance the center of the spiral on the point of a pencil. (Make an indentation, not a hole, to keep the paper from slipping off.) Take the shade off a lamp and turn on the light bulb; wait a few minutes until it gets hot. Then carefully hold your pencil with the balanced spiral just above the bulb. As the air is warmed around the bulb, this hot, light air will start to rise, creating a mini wind that turns the spiral. Turn the light off; it will stop.

Watch for warmed and cooled air moving things outdoors.

EARTH & THE ENVIRONMENT BREATH OF LIFE

Air is everywhere. We cannot see, smell or taste the air around us, and yet it is vitally important to all living things.

Air is the invisible mixture of gases that surrounds the earth providing the nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen that are essential to plants and animals.

Air protects planet Earth from harmful radiation and at the same time traps some heat from the sun, so that life can exist. It transmits sound waves, carries smells, supports birds in flight, and moves pollen and seeds.

Air takes up space and expands when it is heated and contracts when cooled. Air has weight and exerts pressure.

Although we cannot sense the air around us, we can see things moved by the wind, smell scents it carries, feel it when it blows, and know each time we take a breath that air is essential to life.

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