BACK TO NATURE

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CENTER for AQUATIC SCIENCES
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Shell-e-brate the Summer
with these crafts and experiments.

Get crafting

Most kids on the beach end up with a bucket of shells that they collected. Here are a few ideas to help use those shells. For help identifying who the shells belong to, follow this link to our shell identification Back to Nature. If you don't have shells, rocks will work too!

1. **Shell Necklaces (Instructions here)**

Some shells have holes in them already and are easy to turn into a necklace but others do not have a hole which make it more difficult. For shells that do not have a hole take a small piece of clay and press the shell into it. Use a small stick or straw to poke a hole through the clay, allow it to dry, then run a string thought the hole and you have a beautiful necklace.

2. **Shell wind chimes**

Using shells with the holes, string up a few shells about 2 inches apart. Make 4 –6 strings of shells. Cut the bottom off a 2 liter soda bottle and carefully poke holes into the bottle. Attach the strings of shells and hang outside to hear the chimes.

2. **Paint Oyster shell to look like pirates**

3. **Pom-pom snails**

Using a moon snail shell, glue a pom-pom into the hole. Add pipe cleaners with googly eyes to the top of the pom-pom and you have a snail!

4. **Crab magnets (Instructions here)**

Paint shells and glue legs and claws to the inside of the shell sticking out. Glue magnet on the back and attach eyes.

Science at Home

Shells are made out of Calcium Carbonate (chalk is also made of Calcium carbonate) which react with acids. In fact, acids break down calcium carbonate.

The ocean is becoming more acidic and this has an affect on the animals with shells that live within the ocean. As the ocean becomes more acidic the shells of the creatures become weaker. Some species are dying off because of this. Try these experiments at home to see for yourself and watch this video to learn more.

Materials:

1. Shells
2. White chalkboard chalk
3. Vinegar
4. Glass or see through cup

Procedure:

1. Add a 1/4 cup of vinegar to the cup.
2. Drop in a small piece of chalk.
3. Watch what happens (you should see bubbles).
4. Try a separate cup with vinegar and the shell.

Other experiments

1. Try other liquids instead of vinegar, like lemon juice, soda, or hydrochloric acid (use safety precautions, this is a strong acid). See how long it takes a shell to break down in each of these liquids. Which liquids break down the shells fastest?
2. Try different types of shells in the same type of liquid. Are some shells faster at breaking down than others?
3. Leave the shells in the acidic liquid of choice. How long does it take for the shell to completely break down? A week? A Month?