

Things Change



To a 3- or 4-year-old, it may seem that one day is much like the next and that life never changes. The preschool years are a good time to introduce the idea that all things change—both nonliving and living. Note that some things change slowly and some quickly—that some changes we welcome and some we just accept. You can begin with easily observable changes, then introduce the concept of life cycles.

Nonliving things change.

- Experiment with water. Let children paint with water outside on a sunny or windy day. How does the water painting change? Put water into cups and place the cups in the freezer. How does the water change? Place cups with ice cubes in different locations—for example, nearer or farther from a window or perhaps on different sides of a room—and predict which ice cube will melt first.
- Discuss how heating or cooking changes food. What things get hard when you cook them (e.g., eggs) and what things get soft (e.g., butter)?
- Discuss and chart the weather for several days. How has it changed during that time?

Living things change—including plants, animals, and people.

- Help each child fill a clear plastic cup two-thirds full with potting soil. Demonstrate how to plant seeds such as lima beans under the soil next to the side of the cup where they can be seen. Label the cups with the children's names, place them in a shallow pan, and water the seeds. Keep the cups moist in a warm, sunny place. Ask the children to predict what will happen. Follow up the children's predictions with "What makes you think so?" Discuss the plants as they begin to sprout.
- Use a vase of cut flowers as an art subject. In a few days, have the children compare their drawings or paintings of the flowers with the real ones. Ask them, "What changes do you see?"
- Cut open an apple and examine the seeds. Let the children curl up like seeds, and then pretend to grow tall like a tree. Talk about how the seeds grow into an apple tree. Show the children a picture of an apple tree with apples on it and explain that apples ripen when the tree grows up. When the seeds in these apples are planted, they can grow into new trees.
- Read books about eggs and chickens; tadpoles and frogs; and cocoons, caterpillars, and butterflies. Ask the children if they had a puppy or kitten that is now grown. Read a book about a baby animal growing up. In what ways does an animal change as it grows? What things about the baby animal are the same as its mother? What things are different?
- Let children bring in baby pictures of themselves for a display. Children who may not have access to such photos can draw pictures of how they may have looked as babies. Talk about what they can do now that a baby can't do.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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