

Do-It-Yourself Solar Eclipse!

Your young astronomer can create a solar eclipse in just a few seconds using materials found around the house! This experiment demonstrates how a small celestial body like the moon, can obscure the light from a much larger one, such as the sun. Invite your child to recreate this fantastic phenomenon by using a flashlight to represent the sun, a quarter as the moon, and her face as Earth!

What You Need:

- Flashlight
- Quarter

What You Do:

1. Either hold the flashlight for your child, or have her place it on a surface at his eye level.
2. Aim the flashlight at the right side of her face.
3. Have your child hold out the quarter in front of her face.
4. Turn the flashlight on.
5. Have your child position herself so that the quarter is directly between the light and her face. She may have to adjust the position of the instruments involved.
6. Eclipse time! Experiment with both full and partial solar eclipses, where the moon comes between Earth and the sun, and either fully or partially obscures the light from the sun.



Did You Know?

The last total eclipse, which took place in July 2009, was visible from China. Although it only lasted six minutes, Chinese astronomers used 17 observation locations to photograph the corona (the sun's extended outer atmosphere) for over 40 minutes. Normally, the corona is difficult to see because the sun is so bright.

In order to see two total eclipses from the same spot on earth, you'd have to wait about 375 years. Because of their rare and dramatic nature, eclipses are still often greeted with fear and superstition.