

Staying afloat

Brief summary:

In this activity you will experiment with the surface tension of water using pepper and dishwashing liquid.

You will need:

- Small bowl
- Ground pepper
- Dishwashing liquid
- Cocktail stick or toothpick
- Water

What to do:

Step 1. Half fill a small bowl with water.

Step 2. Sprinkle pepper on the surface of the water, forming a small layer.

Step 3. Dip your cocktail stick or toothpick into the washing-up liquid, then dip the tip of the stick in the middle of the water.

Step 4. As the washing-up liquid touches the water, watch what is happening to the pepper. The pepper should spread out and merge together forming patterns.

Take it further:

Experiment with floating different materials on the water, and experiment with different types of liquid, such as salt water, juice or oil.

Have a look at our other surface tension experiment: *Speedy fish experiment*.

Big questions:

- What animals use surface tension?
- Do ships and boats use surface tension?

