

# Decorate Your Science Notebook

Grade Level: K – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Subjects: Science

Duration: Preparation: 15 minutes

Activity: 40 – 60 minutes

Setting: Classroom

## Objectives:

After completing this activity, students will

- begin their use of science notebooks with a sense of personal ownership.
- familiarize themselves with routines around using their science notebooks.

## Materials

- Blank science notebooks (one per student)
- Colored pencils
- Markers
- Optional decorative items. Some suggestions:
  - o Full or half-page blank printable stickers (for covers that aren't a good drawing surface).
  - o Rulers
  - o Stamps and stamp pads
  - o Stencils
  - o Paint

## Background for Educators

There are many opportunities for and benefits to sharing the content of students' science notebooks – both with teachers and with other students. However, it's important to balance this public aspect of the notebook with the personal, encouraging a sense of ownership so that students feel comfortable recording their observations, reflections and other thinking around science. If students view their science notebook as their own, they can start to view it as a useful tool, rather than simply a place to complete assignments for the teacher. Giving students a chance to personalize their science notebooks by decorating the cover at the moment they receive the notebook is a great way to start building this sense of ownership.

## Teacher Preparation

- Be sure to have a blank notebook for each student
- Do some thinking about where students will be keeping their notebooks, and what routines you would like to have in place around retrieving them and putting them away.
- Begin the activity with notebooks in the location where they will live between science lessons.
- Gather all decorating materials. Depending on your students' previous experience with the decorating materials you choose to make available, you

may want to wait to hand them out/have students retrieve them after the introduction, along with their notebooks.

- (Optional) Put blank stickers on notebooks to create a drawing surface. You can also have students do this themselves.

### **Introduction (5 minutes)**

- Before giving students their own notebooks, tell the whole class about the science notebooks and what types of activities they will be using these notebooks for.
- Have an example available and show them that it's blank inside, with a blank cover. Advise students that soon they will be setting up the inside of their notebooks, but *today* they are focusing on the cover and making their notebooks unique and identifiable!
- If necessary, have students prepare their notebook cover as a drawing surface by using a half-sheet or whole-sheet sticker.

### **Activity (35 minutes)**

- Guiding prompt for students:
  - o Use any of the materials provided to **label** the cover of your science notebook with your **name**, and **decorate the cover with any design or image**.
- Have students retrieve their notebooks from where they will be stored for the rest of the school year.
- Circulate around the room to be sure that students are on task. Remind students that they can use any of the materials available.
- Give students *at least* 30 minutes to label and decorate, making sure that all students have their name prominently written on the front cover.

### **Wrap-up**

- (Optional): Give students some time to ask questions about the notebooks in general. You may want to ask: *Do you have any questions about when we will use this notebook and what that will look like? What do you think this notebook might be useful for when doing science or learning about science?*
- Have students put away notebooks in the same place, using the same routine that they will use throughout the year.
- **Additional Time:** *Your students may appreciate some additional time later in the year to add to their cover illustrations. Consider reserving class time for this, including access to all of the materials used.*

### **References**

Fulton, L. & Campbell, B. (2004). Student-centered notebooks. *Science and Children*, 42(3), 26-29.