

Photo Description



A person is reaching toward a large, colorful soap bubble floating in the air. The bubble shows rainbow colors like purple, blue, green, and yellow on its thin surface. The bubble is stretching and changing shape as it moves through the air above a paved area.

Scientific Phenomena

This image demonstrates the Anchoring Phenomenon of soap bubble formation and light interference. The rainbow colors appear because white light from the sun hits the thin soap film and splits into different colors. The soap film acts like a tiny prism, bending light waves at different angles. When light waves bounce off the front and back surfaces of the bubble wall, they interfere with each other, creating the brilliant color patterns we observe. The bubble's shape changes due to surface tension forces trying to minimize the surface area while air pressure keeps it inflated.

Core Science Concepts

1. Light and Color: White light contains all colors of the rainbow. When light hits the soap bubble's thin wall, it separates into different colors we can see.
2. Surface Tension: Soap molecules create a stretchy "skin" that holds the bubble together. This force pulls the bubble into the most efficient shape possible.
3. States of Matter: The bubble demonstrates three states - liquid soap film, gas (air inside), and the interaction between them.
4. Forces and Motion: Air pressure inside the bubble pushes outward while surface tension pulls inward, creating a balance that maintains the bubble's structure.

Pedagogical Tip:

Use bubble-making as a hands-on investigation where students can observe cause and effect relationships. Have them predict what will happen when they change variables like bubble solution concentration or blowing technique.

UDL Suggestions:

Provide multiple ways for students to engage with bubble science: visual observation, tactile exploration of soapy water, and kinesthetic movement as they create bubbles. Use graphic organizers to help students record their observations about bubble colors, shapes, and movements.

Zoom In / Zoom Out

1. Zoom In: At the molecular level, soap molecules arrange themselves in a special way - their "heads" love water while their "tails" avoid it. This creates an incredibly thin layer (only a few molecules thick) that can trap air and create the bubble wall.
2. Zoom Out: Bubbles connect to larger weather and atmospheric systems. The same principles that create soap bubbles help explain how water droplets form in clouds, how rainbows appear after storms, and why oil creates colorful patterns on wet pavement.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think makes the colors appear on the bubble? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
2. How might the bubble's shape change if you gently blow air near it? (Bloom's: Predict | DOK: 2)
3. Why do you think some bubbles last longer than others? (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)
4. What other things in nature show rainbow colors like this bubble? (Bloom's: Apply | DOK: 2)

Potential Student Misconceptions

1. Misconception: "The colors are painted on the bubble or come from colored soap."
Scientific Clarification: The colors come from white light splitting apart when it hits the clear, thin bubble wall - similar to how a prism creates rainbows.
2. Misconception: "Bigger bubbles are stronger than smaller bubbles."
Scientific Clarification: Larger bubbles are actually more fragile because their walls become thinner and the surface tension must stretch over a greater area.
3. Misconception: "The air inside the bubble is different from regular air."
Scientific Clarification: The air inside bubbles is the same air we breathe - it's just trapped by the soap film barrier.

NGSS Connections

- Performance Expectation: 2-PS1-1: Plan and conduct an investigation to describe and classify different kinds of materials by their observable properties
- Disciplinary Core Ideas: 2-PS1.A - Different kinds of matter exist and many of them can be either solid or liquid, depending on temperature
- Crosscutting Concepts: Patterns - Patterns in the natural world can be observed and used as evidence

Science Vocabulary

- * Surface tension: The force that makes the outside of liquids act like a stretchy skin.
- * Interference: When light waves mix together to create new patterns and colors.
- * Transparent: Something you can see through clearly, like the bubble wall.
- * Reflection: When light bounces off a surface, like a mirror or bubble.
- * Molecule: The tiny building blocks that make up all materials.

External Resources

Children's Books:

- Pop! A Book About Bubbles by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
- Bubble Bubble by Mercer Mayer
- The Magic School Bus: Kitchen Chemistry by Joanna Cole

YouTube Videos:

- "How Do Bubbles Get Their Colors? | Physics for Kids" - Simple explanation of light interference in bubbles suitable for elementary students: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXjYHveKnU>
- "Bubble Science Experiments for Kids" - Hands-on bubble investigations and observations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOTyA1hN2vU>