

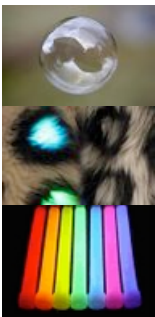


## Example of a design activity - The treasure chest

The following is an example of the sort of activity we will be doing in schools. We usually start with a particular question we have and then we think of an activity that is geared towards allowing children to help us answer this question. The following example activity aims to investigate:

*“What properties of objects are particularly engaging for children?”*

To explore this question we came up with an activity involving various objects in a treasure chest. These objects all have distinct features that allow children to explore the properties of these objects as part of a game. For example:



*Bubbles* are great fun, they float in space and pop if poked

*Fur* is nice to the touch

*Glowsticks* start glowing once bent... and many more.

### The plot

So, imagine, you and your friends are stranded on a desert island somewhere in the wide open sea. There is enough food around and someone will come and rescue you sometime soon, but it is rather boring there. It's up to you to come up with something fun to do while you wait for the rescue team to show up. So, what could you do with all that magical stuff in the treasure chest to keep you and your friends entertained?

### What does it tell us?

Children are great at inventing their own imaginary worlds. The way they incorporate the objects provided in the treasure chest into their game will enable us to see what features of objects children respond to spontaneously. While they explore the content of the chest and stitch together their story we will observe how they interact with the objects and what makes them intriguing or boring.

### How will we find out?

Play sessions will be video taped and the attending researchers will keep notes as the story unfolds. As they explain the objects and their role in the game to each other we will keep track of the plot and occasionally ask them for their motivation. For example, “What makes this piece of lego your inter-galactic phone?” We will carefully analyse the responses along with the video footage to find out what makes some objects more fascinating than others.

### And what happens then?

With what we have learned from activities like the one described here, we will go back to our labs and try and figure out which objects to use in our learning environment.