



## It's never too early - planetary and space science for preschoolers

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### Abstract

In recent years, public outreach has become an integral part of scientific work. Inspired by the 2009 International Year of Astronomy I introduced a yearly "week of planets" in my kids' preschool. Based on some existing material and together with one of the preschool teachers we developed a two hour program for the 5-6 year old preschoolers including an informational part and hands-on activities.

### 1. The Program

The informational part consisted of a journey through the solar system including basic information on the sun and the planets and answering some of the kids' most burning questions like: "Is the moon made of cheese?" and "Are stars really jagged?". Hands-on activities included handcrafting a moon phase simulator out of a shoe box and a flash-light, launching a self made (water-) rocket or creating moon craters with marbles, cocoa and flour which could be converted into a "moon cake" later.

The program was complemented by a reading corner where books and pictures were supplied for all children with the intention that not only the teachers would explain to the children but also the preschoolers could "teach" the younger children about what they had learned. As a final topic we set up a display of inflatable planets in the hallway of the kindergarten showing the full solar system in approximate realistic distances.

### 2. Conclusion

Astronomy is a rewarding subject and a program like this is fun for everybody involved so we would want to encourage other scientists to go out to their local (pre-)schools to inspire kids from the earliest stage with the fun of science and the beauty of the universe.