

## Potato Observation Game

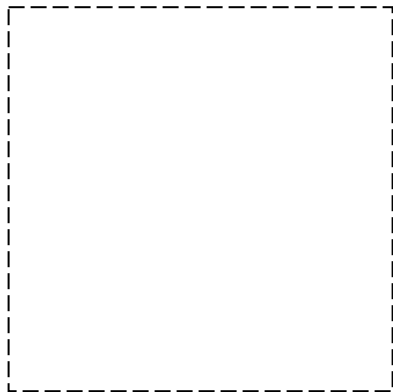
Part I.

Name	Circumference	Girth	Mass
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			



Part II.

Name	Circumference	Girth	Mass
★			



Other observations:

## Teacher Notes

The purpose of this lesson is to teach students how to make *careful* observations.

### Materials:

- handout (above; 1 per student)
- ~30 cm string (1 per pair of students)
- ruler (1 per pair)
- balance/scale (at least 5; 1 per pair ideal)
- \*potatoes- 15 for a class of 30 (normal sized, not the huge baking potatoes)

### Beforehand- Give each potato a name:

1. Cut little strips of paper
2. Write a name on each piece of paper (the more clever/creative, the better)
3. Use a straight pin to attach this "name tag" to the potato. There, now each potato has an identity!

### Procedure:

1. After a short introduction, pair up students and give each pair their materials- 1 string, ruler, handout, and a potato.
2. Do line 1 together with everyone as they measure & record observations about their first potato:
  - a. In column 1, have them write the Name of their potato
  - b. In column 2, have them use their string + ruler to measure/record Circumference, which I defined for them as the widest/longest distance around their potato. (Have them write "longest" above this column as a reminder.)
  - c. In column 3, measure/record Girth- the *shortest* distance around the same potato. (Have them write "shortest" above this column as a reminder.)
  - d. In column 4, measure/record the Mass

\*note- since the potatoes are all named differently, each pair of students will have a different potato's name and observations on line #1.
3. Switch potatoes, making sure the name tags stay stuck in the same potato. It would be nice if the way students switched was systematic (with the person to their right), but it's not absolutely necessary).
4. Fill in line 2 for the new potato. (Guide them, if needed, but let them work on their own as soon as they can.)
5. Keep switching potatoes (together at the same time, on your command) and filling in observations until they've done 10 of them. (You can do fewer than 10 if time's short.) That concludes Part I.

6. For **Part II**, have them switch potatoes once more (this one's special!), and this time fill in its info. on the starred line. Then have them make a detailed sketch of their "special" potato inside the dotted box, featuring anything prominent on it. There's also room to note "Other observations" that stand out. Now that they've seen 11 potatoes, anything unusual about this one should stand out.
7. Now it's time for the big surprise: collect all potatoes in the room, remove their name tags, and jumble them up in a pile!
8. Now students have to find their "special" potato based on the features they just recorded and pin its name back on. If they did a good job, it won't take long.

**Other notes:**

*\*You may have seen a lab similar to this but done with peanuts (see below). Though peanuts are smaller, simpler to use, and cheaper, I used potatoes to avoid the whole issue of peanut allergies.*

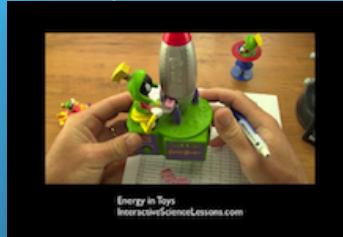
*A couple of quick notes about keeping order:*

- *I chose to keep students seated throughout this as much as possible, since wandering leads to distractions. That means my students only got up to measure mass; the rest they did seated.*
- *I told the class when to switch potatoes. When it seemed like almost everyone was ready, I yelled for groups to switch.*

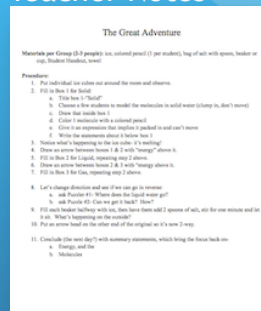
*Check this link for a similar lab; I like the counting/sorting part of it-*  
<http://sciencespot.net/Pages/classgen.html#Anchor4>

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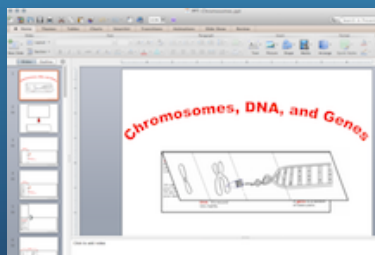
- Videos- where I *show* you how to present each lesson



- Teacher Notes



- PowerPoints



- Student Handouts

