



DALLAS ARBORETUM

Education

Homemade Marble Runs: Engage Your Kids for Hours with Science!

Traveling water is a unifying theme found throughout the Rory Meyers Children's Adventure Garden. But what makes water move downhill? This week's activity provides opportunities for families to dig deeper.



You may not recognize the name, but marble runs have been a popular children's toy for decades now. Children use ramps and angles to direct a marble down a path, all powered by gravity and momentum. In fact, there are even competitions with intricate systems built by adults all centered on the marble run!

You don't need to buy a premade kit to build a marble run, though! You can make one at home using recycled materials. Cardboard tubes, tin cans, and boxes all represent a variety of building materials – and you can make it as complex as you'd like.



Dallas Arboretum member Katelyn W. shared this marble run in her living room.

Here are some great marble run websites for inspiration:

<https://www.hellowonderful.co/post/15-impressive-ways-to-make-a-marble-run/>

<https://www.edenproject.com/learn/for-everyone/how-to-make-a-recycled-marble-run>

<https://babbledabledo.com/recycled-diy-marble-run/>

<https://tinkerlab.com/toilet-paper-roll-marble-run/>

Kids engaged? Now, take it further!

Once your kids are hooked on the marble run, you can use it as an opportunity to talk about gravity and energy!

A simple question, such as “What makes the marble travel towards the ground?” or “How is the marble’s travel like water?” can spark a conversation that encourages your children to think scientifically about the world around them.

Here are some of our favorite resources to learn more about gravity:

[NASA: What is Gravity?](#)

[Crash Course Kids: Gravity](#)

Good luck and enjoy building your marble runs. We’d love to see your results!