

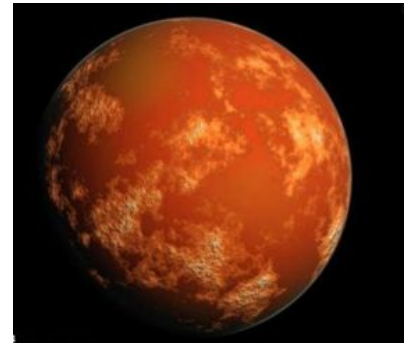
Pretend and play! – Scientists in Space

Easy drama activities you can do at home with young children By Joanna Parkes

Joanna Parkes is The Ark's John Coolahan Early Years Artist in Residence 2019/2020. She has created this activity sheet to help you enjoy easy drama fun at home with little ones.

Scientists in Space

Joanna's final Seedlings Early Years Workshops as part of her residency took place in our building in March 2020. For these workshops, the children and adults who participated pretended to be Scientists in Space going on a mission to Mars to collect samples of materials there to make some potions. We had some toy animals in our space laboratory who needed these potions in order to help them live in space. Would you like to have a similar adventure at home?



Stage 1: Setting up the Spaces – Creating the environments

If you can use several rooms to set up your play environments you could have a laboratory in space in one room, another area such as the staircase or bathroom could be the rocket and then another room or area can be set up as Mars. Alternatively, you can simply use different corners of the same room.

You can do as much setting up of these spaces as your time, space and energy allows. The children can be involved in creating and making the three different play spaces. There are lots of ideas for creating each space given below but even one or two props can be enough to stimulate a young child's imagination. If you don't have something, just mime and pretend that you do, which is also great fun.

If you don't have much time, you can focus on setting up Mars only. For added fun, you could set up the 'Mars' area secretly in order to create a sense of surprise and anticipation for the child.

Space 1: The Laboratory

- Use any materials available to give the sense of a laboratory in space – trays covered with silver foil, funnels, little bottles, muffin-style baking trays, little spoons, plastic containers, small plastic bags, funnels and rolling pins.
- You could cover furniture with silvery materials if available. You could print out some pictures of Mars to stick on the walls.
- Collect a couple of soft toys and make a 'bed' for them with a shoe box and small piece of material or towel.



Space 2: The Rocket

- Use a smallish space such as the stairs or bathroom to create the rocket which will take the scientists from the laboratory to Mars.
- With your child's help, collect things which could be used to create rocket controls.
- This could include silver kitchen utensils, buttons or lights that flash, plastic bottle tops as buttons or print out rocket control images from the internet.



Space 3: Mars

When the scientists are on Mars, their job is to collect materials to make potions for the animals in their laboratory. These are found in the craters on the surface of Mars and the scientists go round each crater and pick up small samples.

- As the surface of Mars is red, dry and dusty, collect as much red fabric and material as possible.
- Use the fabric to cover furniture and hang on the walls, if possible, to give the idea that you are now on Mars.
- The craters can be made with plastic bowls and trays.

Possible contents for the craters:

You may wish to choose two or three of these options or come up with your own ideas.

- **Red plasticine / marla / playdough** (obviously it doesn't have to be red but if everything can be red it adds to the sense of a different place)
- You could make your own **playdough** and colour it red, glittery silver or black – www.iheartnaptime.net/play-dough-recipe
- **Uncooked rice** dyed red – pour some uncooked rice in a bowl and squeeze in some red paint or food colouring and glitter. Mix until the rice is covered and let it dry.
- **Play sand** – fill a small bowl with play sand and add some red food colouring.
- **Red wool** – cut into little sections
- **Red jelly** – small amount in a plastic bowl
- **Mars Sand** – 4 cups of flour mixed with ½ cup baby oil makes a soft, gentle sand-like texture. You could add a bit of red pant or food colouring if available.



Stage 2: Becoming the scientists and setting off on the mission

Once you have set up all your spaces, you can imagine becoming scientists and exploring your environments. Here's a suggested route through them, but feel free to invent your own.

In the Lab:

- Once the play environments have been set up, begin your story in the laboratory
- Ask your child if they would like to become a scientist in space
- Explain that the toys need a special potion in order to be able survive in space
- They can set up the toys in little beds – if they have a doctor's set, they can check their temperature and listen to their heart-beat
- Suggest the scientists collect up their equipment – plastic trays, muffin trays, little spoons and set off for Mars
- They may need to put on some special clothes to go to Mars – pretend to put on your space-suit, special helmet, space boots and gloves and anything else they think they should wear on Mars

In the Rocket:

- Make your way to the rocket
- Once inside, check all the buttons are working
- Count down from 10 – shake and bounce from side to side as the rocket takes off
- Imagine what stars and planets you are passing
- After a few moments, land the rocket on Mars – bouncing and shaking again to land

On Mars:

- When you've landed on Mars and are coming out of the rocket you could do a slow space walk from the rocket to 'Mars'. Mars is smaller than Earth so has less gravity (though it has a bit more gravity than the moon)
- Encourage the young scientists to explore Mars and see what they can find in the various craters
- They should touch, explore and investigate all the different materials first
- Then they can collect samples of each material and place them in the different sections of their muffin tray or plastic containers

Return to the Lab:

- When they have explored and played with all the materials in the craters, it's time to head back to the science laboratory
- When the scientists are back in the laboratory they can start to mix all the samples they have found on Mars to make their potion
- Using the little spoons they could take small samples of each
- They could mix them together in different ways. For example, put the samples into a plastic bag and use the rolling-pin to mix, squish and squash everything together
- They could then use a funnel to pour their potion into a little bottle
- Once the potion is ready, they can pretend to give it to the toys in the beds and check to see how long it takes before they are able to survive in space



After that it's up to you as space scientists to continue to play and pretend!