

Exploring Solar Energy

Teacher Guide

(Seven Activities)

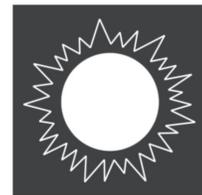
Grades: 5-8

Topic: Solar

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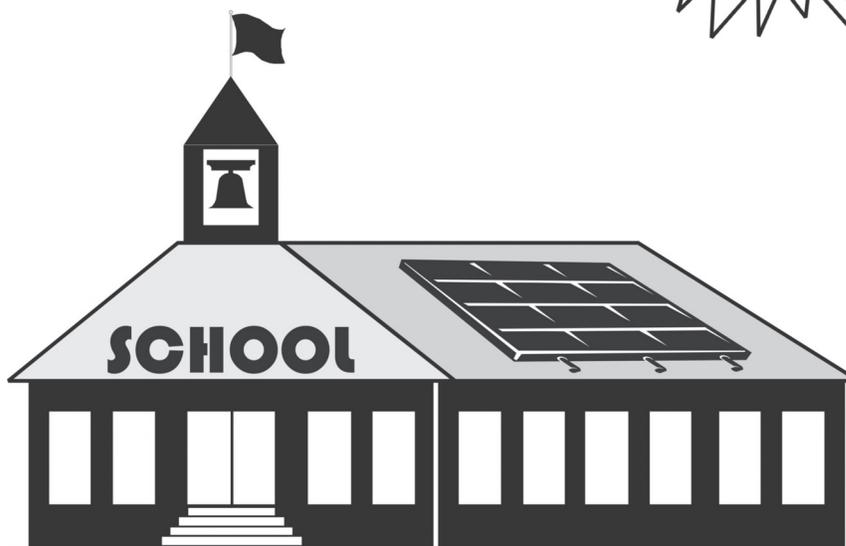
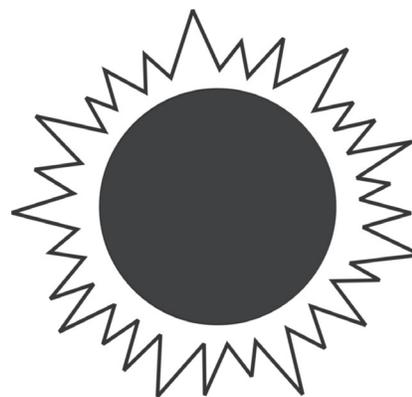
EXPLORING SOLAR ENERGY Teacher Guide

Hands-on explorations that teach scientific concepts of solar energy and photovoltaics to intermediate students.



GRADE LEVEL
Intermediate

SUBJECT AREAS
Science
Social Studies
Math
Language Arts



NEED

2006-2007

Putting Energy into Education

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NEED Mission Statement

The mission of the NEED Project is to promote an energy conscious and educated society by creating effective networks of students, educators, business, government and community leaders to design and deliver objective, multi-sided energy education programs.

Teacher Advisory Board Vision Statement

In support of NEED, the national Teacher Advisory Board (TAB) is dedicated to developing and promoting standards-based energy curriculum and training.



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MATERIALS NEEDED

Cold and Hot Water
White & Black Construction Paper
Overhead Projectors
5 Metric Rulers
Scissors
Transparency Paper
Clear Plastic Wrap
Rubber Bands
Cardboard Box

MATERIALS IN SOLAR KIT

Class Set of Student Guides
5 Radiation Can Kits
10 Thermometers
12 Concave Mirrors
20 Plastic Containers
5 Beakers
2 Solar Balloons with String
5 Solar PV Kits
1 Solar House Kit
Clay

COST OF KIT: \$350.00



Correlations to National Science Standards

UNIFYING CONCEPTS & PROCESSES

1. Systems, Order, and Organization

- a. The goal of this standard is to think and analyze in terms of systems, which will help students keep track of mass, energy, objects, organisms, and events referred to in the content standards.
- b. Science assumes that the behavior of the universe is not capricious, that nature is the same everywhere, and that it is understandable and predictable. Students can develop an understanding of order—or regularities—in systems, and by extension, the universe; then they can develop understanding of basic laws, theories, and models that explain the world.
- c. Prediction is the use of knowledge to identify and explain observations, or changes, in advance. The use of mathematics, especially probability, allows for greater or lesser certainty of prediction.
- d. Order—the behavior of units of matter, objects, organisms, or events in the universe—can be described statistically.
- e. Probability is the relative certainty (or uncertainty) that individuals can assign to selected events happening (or not happening) in a specified time or space.
- f. Types and levels of organization provide useful ways of thinking about the world.

2. Evidence, Models, and Explanation

- a. Evidence consists of observations and data on which to base scientific explanations. Using evidence to understand interactions allows individuals to predict changes in natural and designed systems.

3. Change, Constancy, and Measurement

- a. Although most things are in the process of change, some properties of objects and processes are characterized by constancy; for example, the speed of light, the charge of an electron, and the total mass plus energy of the universe.
- b. Energy can be transferred and matter can be changed. Nevertheless, when measured, the sum of energy and matter in systems, and by extension in the universe, remains the same.
- c. Changes can occur in the properties of materials, position of objects, motion, and form and function of systems. Interactions within and among systems result in change. Changes in systems can be quantified and measured. Mathematics is essential for accurately measuring change.
- d. Different systems of measurement are used for different purposes. An important part of measurement is knowing when to use which system.

4. Evolution and Equilibrium

- b. Equilibrium is a physical state in which forces and changes occur in opposite and offsetting directions.
- c. Interacting units of matter tend toward equilibrium states in which the energy is distributed as randomly and uniformly as possible.

INTERMEDIATE (GRADES 5-8) CONTENT STANDARD–A: SCIENCE AS INQUIRY

1. Abilities Necessary to do Scientific Inquiry

- a. Identify questions that can be answered through scientific inquiry.
- b. Design and conduct a scientific investigation.
- c. Use appropriate tools and techniques to gather, analyze, and interpret data.
- d. Develop descriptions, explanations, predictions, and models using evidence.
- e. Think critically and logically to make the relationships between evidence and explanations.
- f. Recognize and analyze alternative explanations and predictions.
- g. Communicate scientific procedures and explanations.
- h. Use mathematics in all aspects of scientific inquiry.

INTERMEDIATE STANDARD–B: PHYSICAL SCIENCE

3. Transfer of Energy

- a. Energy is a property of many substances and is associated with heat, light, electricity, mechanical motion, sound, nuclei, and the nature of a chemical.
- b. Energy is transferred in many ways.
- c. Heat moves in predictable ways, flowing from warmer objects to cooler ones, until both reach the same temperature.
- d. **Light interacts with matter by transmission (including refraction), absorption, or scattering (including reflection).**
- e. **Electrical circuits provide a means of transferring electrical energy.**
- g. **The sun is the major source of energy for changes on the earth's surface. The sun loses energy by emitting light. A tiny fraction of that light reaches earth, transferring energy from the sun to the earth. The sun's energy arrives as light with a range of wavelengths.**

INTERMEDIATE STANDARD–C: LIFE SCIENCE

4. Populations and Ecosystems

- a. **For ecosystems, the major source of energy is sunlight. Energy entering ecosystems as sunlight is transferred by producers into chemical energy through photosynthesis. The energy then passes from organism to organism in food webs.**

Teacher Guide

HANDS-ON EXPLORATIONS TO TEACH INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS THE SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS OF SOLAR ENERGY.

BACKGROUND

Students use a backgrounder and hands-on explorations to develop an understanding of solar energy.

CONCEPTS

- Nuclear fusion within the sun produces enormous amounts of energy, some in the form of radiant energy that travels through space to the Earth.
- Most of the energy on Earth came from the sun. Only geothermal, nuclear, and tidal energy do not.
- The sun's energy makes life possible on Earth because of the greenhouse effect.
- We use the sun's energy to produce heat, light, and electricity.
- It is difficult to capture the sun's energy because it is spread out—not much is concentrated in any one place. We can capture solar energy with solar collectors that convert radiant energy into heat.
- Photovoltaic cells convert radiant energy directly into electricity.
- Concentrated solar power systems collect radiant energy from the sun and convert it into heat to produce electricity.

TIME

Five 45-minute class periods.

PROCEDURE

Step One—Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with the **Teacher** and **Student Guides**, and with the materials in the kit. Make sure that the PV cell and motor work smoothly. If the motor doesn't spin immediately, 'jumpstart' it by touching the leads to the ends of a C or D battery.
- If the thermometers have been unused for a long time, they may need to be recalibrated. If they are not reading the same temperature, put them in ice water, then a few minutes later, in boiling water. This should recalibrate the thermometers to the same temperature.
- Make a transparency of the PV Cell explanation on page 11.
- Collect the materials that are not included in the kit. See the Materials List on page 3 for materials that are not in the kit.
- Review the Lab Safety Rules on page 14 .
- Divide the class into five groups.
- Set up five centers that have access to direct sunlight.

TEACHER INFORMATION: What is Energy?

Energy is the ability to do work, the ability to make a change. Everything that happens in the world involves a change of some kind, the exchange of energy in some way. The total amount of energy in the universe remains the same. When we use energy, we do not 'use it up', we convert one form of energy into other forms. Usually the conversion of energy produces some heat, which is considered the lowest form of energy, since it dissipates into the surroundings and is difficult to capture and use again. Energy is categorized in many ways—by the forms it takes and by what it does—the changes it makes—the effects we can see or feel or measure.

What Energy Does: Energy is recognized in the following ways:

- ◆ Energy is light—energy produces light—the movement of energy in transverse electromagnetic waves—radiant energy.
- ◆ Energy is heat—energy produces heat—the movement of atoms and molecules within substances—thermal energy.
- ◆ Energy is sound—energy produces sound—the back-and-forth vibration of substances in longitudinal waves.
- ◆ Energy is motion—energy produces motion—kinetic energy.
- ◆ Energy is growth—energy is required for cells to reproduce—chemical energy stored in the bonds of nutrients.
- ◆ Energy is electricity to run technology—the movement of electrons from atom to atom.

Forms of Energy: Energy is recognized in many forms, all of which are potential or kinetic:

- ◆ Thermal Energy (Heat)
- ◆ Mechanical Energy (Motion)
- ◆ Chemical Energy (Energy in Wood, Fossil Fuels)
- ◆ Electrical Energy (Electricity, Lightning)
- ◆ Nuclear Energy (Fission, Fusion)
- ◆ Radiant Energy (Visible Light, X-rays, Microwaves)
- ◆ Sound (Motion)

TEACHER INFORMATION: Solar Energy

Solar energy is energy from the sun. The sun is a giant ball of hydrogen and helium gas. The enormous heat and pressure in the interior of the sun cause the nuclei of two hydrogen atoms to fuse, producing one helium atom in a process called fusion. During fusion, nuclear energy is converted into thermal (heat) and radiant energy. The radiant energy is emitted from the sun in all directions and some of it reaches Earth. Radiant energy is energy that travels in electromagnetic waves or rays. Radiant energy includes visible light, x-rays, infrared rays, microwaves, gamma rays, and others. These rays have different amounts of energy depending upon their wavelength. The shorter the wavelength, the more energy they contain.

ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOLAR ENERGY (45 minutes)

- Objectives:** To learn about solar energy by reading the background information.
To practice reading a thermometer with Fahrenheit and Celsius scales.
To practice conversions between Fahrenheit and Celsius scales.

- Introduce solar energy as the topic of exploration and have the students make a list of the things they know and questions they have about solar energy.
- Distribute the **Student Guides** to the students and have them read the backgrounder. Have the students revise their list of the things they know and the questions they have. Discuss the questions they have and have them research specific questions as homework.

- **Go to PAGE 6 of the Student Guide.** Have the students read and complete the Thermometer worksheet. Review the answers (see page 12 of **Teacher Guide** for answers).
- **Go to PAGE 7 of the Student Guide.** Have the students read and complete the Temperature Conversion worksheet. Review the answers (see page 13 of **Teacher Guide** for answers).

ACTIVITY 2: CONVERTING RADIANT ENERGY TO HEAT (45 minutes)

MATERIALS IN KIT: 5 radiation can kits, 10 thermometers, 5 beakers

MATERIALS NEEDED: pitchers of cold and hot water, overhead projectors

Objective: To learn that radiant energy can be reflected and absorbed by objects. When it is absorbed by objects, some is converted into heat.

- **Go to PAGE 8 of the Student Guide.** Place students in their groups and assign each group to a center. Explain the procedure and have the students complete the activity.
- Review the activity with the students to make sure they understand that:
 - radiant energy can be reflected or absorbed when it hits objects.*
 - absorbed radiant energy can be converted into heat.*
 - black objects tend to absorb radiant energy.*
 - shiny objects tend to reflect radiant energy.*
 - radiant energy can be produced by the sun or by an artificial source.*

ACTIVITY 3: SOLAR CONCENTRATION (45 minutes)

MATERIALS IN KIT: 5 radiation kits, 10 thermometers, 12 concave mirrors, clay, 5 beakers

MATERIALS NEEDED: pitcher of cold water, metric rulers

Objective: To learn that radiant energy can be concentrated on an object with a concave mirror.

- **Go to PAGE 9 of the Student Guide.** Place students in their groups, assign them with A-E labels, and assign each group to a center with the corresponding number of concave mirrors. Explain the procedure and have the students complete the activity. They must get data from the other groups to complete the activity.
- While the students are waiting the 10 minutes, review the activity with the students to make sure they understand that:
 - a mirror reflects radiant energy.*
 - a concave mirror can concentrate solar radiation onto an object.*

ACTIVITY 4: SOLAR COLLECTION (45 minutes)

MATERIALS IN KIT: 20 plastic containers, 10 thermometers, 5 beakers, rubber bands

MATERIALS NEEDED: cold water, plastic wrap, black & white paper

Objective: To learn that radiant energy can be collected, converted into heat, and stored.

- **Go to PAGE 10 of the Student Guide.** Place students in their groups and assign each group to a center. Explain the procedure and have the students complete the activity.
- Review the activity with the students, using the Greenhouse Effect diagram on page 2 of the **Student Guide**, to make sure they understand that:

radiant energy can pass through transparent materials such as plastic wrap, but thermal energy (heat) does not.

black objects tend to absorb radiant energy.

white objects tend to reflect radiant energy.

- **Go to PAGE 11 of the Student Guide.** Play outside with the solar balloons on a sunny day.

TEACHER INFORMATION: Photovoltaics

In a PV cell, pure silicon is used to form very thin wafers. In some of these wafers, a small amount of the element phosphorous is added. In the other wafers, a small amount of the element boron is added.

The phosphorous gives its wafer an excess of free electrons; therefore, this wafer has negative character. This wafer is called the **n-layer**. The n-layer is not a charged wafer—it has an equal number of protons and electrons—but some of the electrons are not held tightly to the atoms. They are free to move about.

The boron gives its wafer a positive character, because it has a tendency to attract electrons. This layer also has an equal number of protons and electrons—it has a positive character but not a positive charge. This wafer is called the **p-layer**.

When the two wafers are placed together, the free electrons from the n-layer are attracted to the p-layer. At the moment of contact between the two wafers, free electrons from the n-layer flow into the p-layer for a split second, then form a barrier to prevent more electrons from moving from one layer to the other. This contact point and barrier is called the **p-n junction**.

Once the layers have been joined, there is a negative charge in the p-layer section of the junction and a positive charge in the n-layer section of the junction. This imbalance in the charge of the two layers at the p-n junction produces an electric field between the p-layer and the n-layer.

If the PV cell is placed in the sun, radiant energy strikes the electrons in the p-n junction and energizes them, knocking them free of their atoms. These electrons are attracted to the positive charge in the n-layer and are repelled by the negative charge in the p-layer.

A wire can be attached from the p-layer to the n-layer to form a circuit. As the free electrons are pushed into the n-layer by the radiant energy, they repel each other. The wire provides a path for the electrons to flow away from each other. This flow of electrons is an electric current that we can observe.

See the PV Cell diagram on page 11 to use as a transparency in explaining how a PV cell works.

ACTIVITY 5: PHOTOVOLTAICS (45 minutes)

MATERIALS IN KIT: 1 solar house kit, 5 solar energy kits with PV cells, motors, and fans

MATERIALS NEEDED: cardboard box, transparencies, overhead projectors

Objectives: To learn that radiant energy can be converted directly into electricity.
To learn that a motor converts electricity into motion.

- **Go to PAGE 12 of the Student Guide.** Make a solar house using the Solar House Kit to demonstrate the uses of PV cells.
- **Go to PAGE 13 of the Student Guide.** Place students in their groups and assign each group to a center. Explain the procedure and have the students complete the activity.
- Review the activity with the students, using the PV Cell Transparency on page 11 of the **Teacher Guide**, to make sure they understand that:
 - ◆ **PV cells can convert radiant energy directly into electricity.**
 - ◆ **motors can convert electricity into motion.**
 - ◆ **sunlight and artificial light are radiant energy.**

ACTIVITY 6: PHOTOVOLTAIC ARRAYS ON THE SCHOOL (ongoing)

Objective: To learn about and monitor the PV arrays on the school.

- Have the school's energy/facility manager or administrator speak to the students about the PV arrays on the school and show them how they work. If possible, have the students monitor the electrical output of the arrays and correlate the output to weather conditions. See NEED's **Monitoring & Mentoring** (Grades 5-6) and **Learning & Conserving** (Grades 7-8) activities for more information.

ACTIVITY 7: MAKING SOLAR OVENS

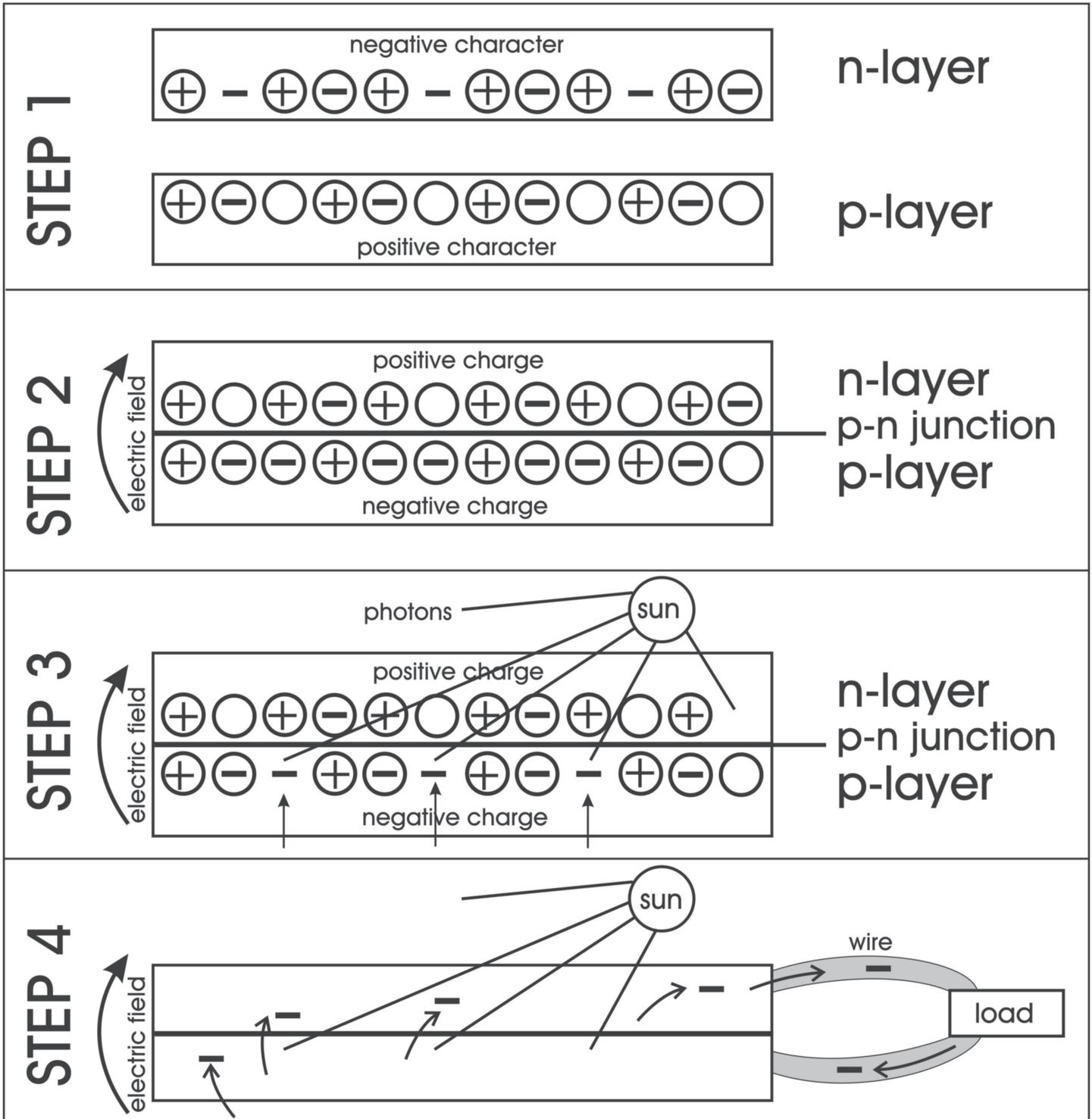
MATERIALS NEEDED: see *Materials List on page 14 of Student Guide*

Objective: To make solar ovens.

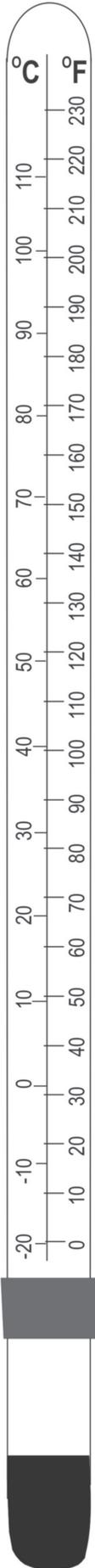
- **Go to PAGES 14-15 of the Student Guide.** Have the students make solar ovens and cook food in them on a sunny day.

PHOTOVOLTAIC CELL

- ⊕ proton
- ⊖ tightly-held electron
- free electron
- location that can accept an electron



THERMOMETER ANSWER KEY



A thermometer measures temperature. The temperature of an object or a substance shows how hot or cold it is. This thermometer is a long glass tube filled with a colored liquid. Liquids expand (take up more space) as they get hotter.

Temperature can be measured using many different scales. The scales we use most are:

CELSIUS

The Celsius (C) scale uses the freezing point of water as 0°C and the boiling point of water as 100°C .

FAHRENHEIT

The Fahrenheit (F) scale uses the freezing point of water as 32°F and the boiling point of water as 212°F . Zero (0°F) on the Fahrenheit scale is the temperature of a mixture of equal weights of snow and salt.

In the United States, we usually use the Fahrenheit scale in our daily lives, and the Celsius scale for scientific work.

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

The temperature of the human body is $98\text{-}99^{\circ}\text{F}$. Look at the drawing of the thermometer and estimate what the reading would be on the Celsius scale: **37°C**

A comfortable spring day is about 75°F . What would that reading be on the Celsius scale? **25°C**

The temperature of a hot shower is about 105°F . What would that reading be on the Celsius scale? **42°C**

FAHRENHEIT/CELSIUS CONVERSION

On the Fahrenheit scale, the freezing point of water is 32° and the boiling point of water is 212° - a range of 180°.

On the Celsius scale, the freezing point of water is 0° and the boiling point of water is 100° - a range of 100°.

To convert from Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply the C number by $\frac{180}{100}$ or $\frac{9}{5}$, then add 32, as shown in the formula below.

$$F = \left(\frac{9}{5} \times C \right) + 32$$

$$\text{If } C = 5 \quad F = \left(\frac{9}{5} \times 5 \right) + 32 \quad F = 9 + 32 = 41$$

To convert from Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 from the F number, then multiply by $\frac{100}{180}$ or $\frac{5}{9}$ as shown in the formula below.

$$C = \frac{5}{9} \times (F - 32)$$

$$\text{If } F = 50 \quad C = \frac{5}{9} \times (50 - 32) \quad C = \frac{5}{9} \times 18 = 10$$

PROBLEMS TO ANSWER:

If C is 50°, what is the temperature in Fahrenheit? **122°F**

If F is 100°, what is the temperature in Celsius? **37.78°C**

Lab Safety Rules

EYE SAFETY

Always wear safety glasses when performing experiments.

FIRE SAFETY

Do not heat any substance or piece of equipment unless specifically instructed to do so.

Be careful of loose clothing. Do not reach across or over a flame.

Keep long hair pulled back and secured.

Do not heat any substance in a closed container.

Always use the tongs or protective gloves when handling hot objects. Do not touch hot objects with your hands.

Keep all lab equipment, chemicals, papers, and personal effects away from the flame.

Extinguish the flame as soon as you are finished with the experiment and move it away from the immediate work area.

HEAT SAFETY

Always use tongs or protective gloves when handling hot objects and substances.

Keep hot objects away from the edge of the lab table—in a place where no one will come into contact with them.

Do not use the steam generator without the assistance of your teacher.

Remember that many objects will remain hot for a long time after the heat source is removed or turned off.

GLASS SAFETY

Never use a piece of glass equipment that appears cracked or broken.

Handle glass equipment carefully. If a piece of glassware breaks, do not attempt to clean it up yourself. Inform your teacher.

Glass equipment can become very hot. Use tongs if glass has been heated.

Clean glass equipment carefully before packing it away.

CHEMICAL SAFETY

Do not smell, touch, or taste chemicals unless instructed to do so.

Keep chemical containers closed except when using them.

Do not mix chemicals without specific instructions.

Do not shake or heat chemicals without specific instructions.

Dispose of used chemicals as instructed. Do not pour chemicals back into their containers without specific instructions to do so.

If a chemical accidentally touches your skin, immediately wash the area with water and inform your teacher.

EXPLORING SOLAR ENERGY

Evaluation Form

State: ____ **Grade Level:** ____ **Number of Students:** ____

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Did you conduct the entire activity? | Yes | No |
| 2. Were the instructions clear and easy to follow? | Yes | No |
| 3. Did the activity meet your academic objectives? | Yes | No |
| 4. Was the activity age appropriate? | Yes | No |
| 5. Were the allotted times sufficient to conduct the activity? | Yes | No |
| 6. Was the activity easy to use? | Yes | No |
| 7. Was the preparation required acceptable for the activity? | Yes | No |
| 8. Were the students interested and motivated? | Yes | No |
| 9. Was the energy knowledge content age appropriate? | Yes | No |
| 10. Would you use the activity again? | Yes | No |

How would you rate the activity overall (excellent, good, fair, poor)?

How would your students rate the activity overall (excellent, good, fair, poor)?

What would make the activity more useful to you?

Other Comments:

Please fax or mail to:
NEED Project
PO Box 10101
Manassas, VA 20108
FAX: 1-800-847-1820

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North Carolina Department of Administration
State Energy Office
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New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
Noble Energy
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Ohio Energy Project
Oil & Gas Rental Services
Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Permian Basin Petroleum Association
Petroleum Equipment Suppliers Association
Premiere
Puerto Rico Energy Affairs Administration
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