

# NEW YORK CITY WATER SUPPLY



## Activity 2: THE VALUE OF WATER

*This activity examines our perception of water and helps students understand, through acting, the importance of water in our lives.*

### Objectives:

- To help participants understand how much water they use each day.
- To encourage discussion about the value of water.

### Materials:

1. A one gallon water jug
2. Your imagination

### Method:

- Ask your students if they have used water during the day. Some may answer that they have not. How was water used? List responses on the board. Encourage your students to include all water use, including the water they gave to pets and plants. Ask your students to think about the dependence living things have on water.
- Hold up a filled gallon water container and ask: "How many gallons of water do you think you use each day?" Think about how much each activity uses. For example, a ten minute shower uses about 50 gallons, one flush of the toilet averages three to five gallons and brushing teeth with the water running uses about 15 gallons. Estimate personal water use again. If the numbers are closer to 100 gallons a day, they are correct.
- "How do we get our water at home?" [Turn the tap.] Demonstrate the simplicity of this action.
- Ask your students to imagine living in New York City 160 years ago, before people could simply turn on the tap and get clean water. Where would their water come from? [From a local well or a stream.]
- Pretend to go outside to a local well for water. "What is a well?" Use the example of digging a hole in the sand at the beach and having it fill with water as an illustration of a well. What will you need to bring with you? [A bucket, a lantern at night and warm clothing during the winter.] Let's get ready to go...

- Participants can do this activity as a group or one or two students can act it out in front of the class. Walk to the well, set down our lantern and bucket, and lower the well bucket to get water. Hoist the full bucket and empty it into the bucket you will carry home. Carry the bucket carefully. Why? [You do not want to spill any water.] Bring the bucket inside and lift it onto a table. "How did that feel?" [Heavy, a lot of work.] Imagine having to gather water that way all the time. "How would you feel about this water?" [Valuable, important, needs protection.] "Would you be careful with the water you use at home or would you waste it?" [Careful because I would not want to have to gather more water unnecessarily. I would conserve water.]
- "How much does water weigh?" Pass around the gallon jug of water. Estimate its weight. A gallon of water actually weighs 8.34 pounds. How much would a five gallon bucket weigh?

### Discussion:

- If anyone in the class has gone camping ask how they treated the water they carried?
- Ask your students to describe how water is collected and reserved in countries their families are from or those they may have visited.

### For more information contact:

New York City  
Department of Environmental Protection  
59-17 Junction Boulevard  
Flushing, NY 11373  
educationoffice@dep.nyc.gov

Dial 311 for all NYC government information and services

Also visit DEP's Web site at:

[www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep)