

ACTIVITY

Let's Invent!

Celebrate National Inventors' Day by Inventing

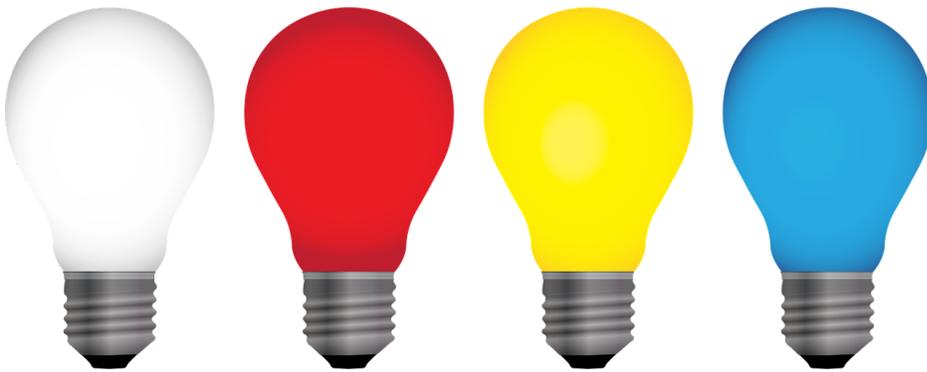


Image by [Sinisa Maric](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Grade Levels: PreK-8

Age Levels:

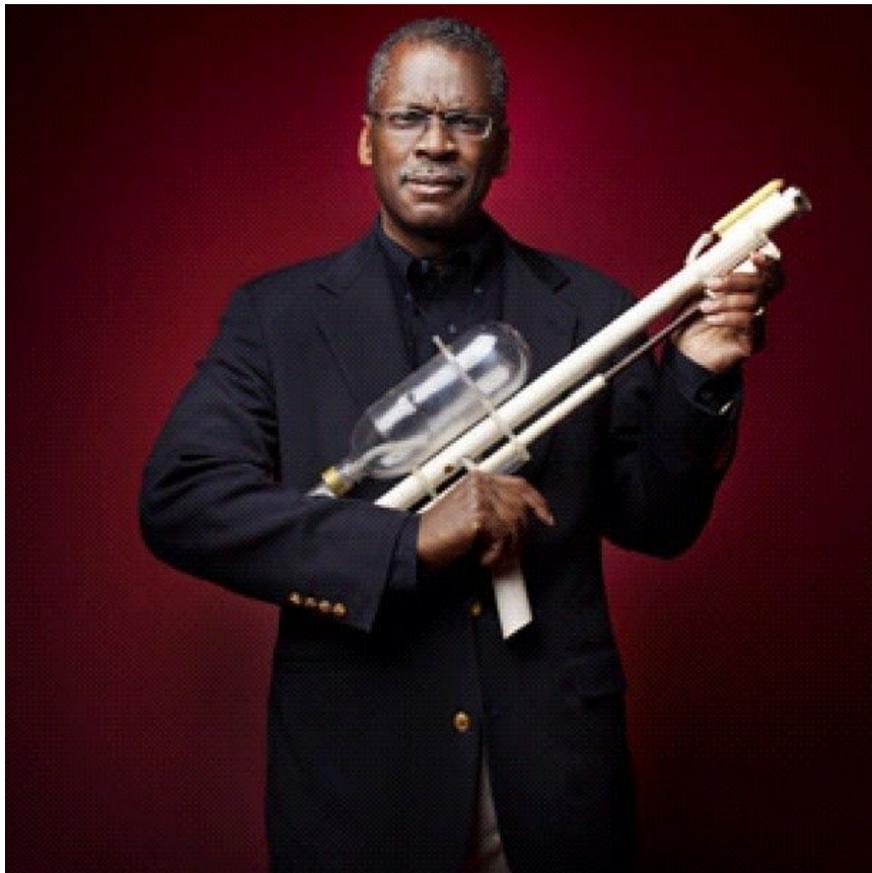
- PreK 3-5 yrs (preschool)
- 5-6 yrs (kindergarten)
- 6-8 yrs (primary)
- 9-11 yrs (elementary)
- 11-14 yrs (middle school)

Background:

Did you know that we celebrate National Inventors' Day in the United States on February 11? This day was chosen because it is Thomas Alva Edison's birthday and he is one of the greatest inventors of all time. Edison received more than 1,000 patents in his lifetime and many of these inventions made incredible contributions to our lives. He is probably best known for having invented the first incandescent light bulb that was able to glow for at least 13 hours! Prior to his invention, scientists

were only able to achieve bulbs that burned for a few minutes. You can learn more about Edison through the [Library of Congress](#) or the [Thomas Edison National Historical Park](#).

We use inventions every day. Some [inventions changed our world](#) while others are just plain fun to use. For example, [Lonnie Johnson](#) is a famous inventor today. He invented one of the most popular toys of all time -- [the super soaker water gun](#). Inventors come from every cultural identity and background. For some examples, see the websites: [Ten African American Inventors Who Changed the World](#), [Asian Inventors](#), and [Famous Hispanic Inventors Who Changed the World](#). In addition, [women inventors](#) have created groundbreaking innovations and [LGBTQ+ inventors, innovators, and scientists](#) have a long history of celebrated contributions to science, technology, and invention.



"The original Super-Soaker prototype and its inventor, Lonnie Johnson." by Communicator is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The world is full of inventions and new ones are created every day. Look around your home and you are certain to find a lot of inventions. Some are complex like the refrigerator and computer. But, others are rather simple like Velcro[®], buttons, pencils, and Post-It[®] notes.

Activity Description: Practice inventing just like Edison. Explore materials around your home. Modify them. Experiment with them. Be curious. Create something new and useful to meet a want or need.

What tools and materials do I need?

- Assorted recyclable or throwaway materials and items (laundry container caps, takeout containers, broken toys, dried out markers, old CDs, empty thread or ribbon spools, packaging materials, etc.)
- Miscellaneous materials around your home such as string, rubber bands, paper clips, paper bags, disposable cups, etc.
- Wrapping paper, construction paper, or cardboard scraps
- Glue, masking tape, and/or clear tape
- Coloring utensils (e.g., crayons, markers)
- Scissors

What should I do?

1. **Closely observe the materials you have to work with.** Think about different ways that these materials can be used or modified to create something new. Can the materials be cut or shaped to change them? Can materials be connected together with glue or tape?
2. **Play around with the materials** to see how they might be combined together in different ways. Ponder how these things can be used for something different than their original purpose. For example, can you turn your materials into one of these useful objects?
 - Coin sorter
 - Picture holder
 - Jewelry
 - Game or toy
 - Cell phone or book stand
 - Crayon storage
 - Desk or drawer organizer
 - Coasters
 - Bookmark
 - Doll furniture
 - Musical instrument
3. **Explore ideas.** There are many websites with ideas for converting throwaway items into useful products. If you can't come up with ideas yourself, search online for some suggestions such as [BabbleDabbleDo](#), [Reuse This Bag](#), and [BeautyHarmonyLife](#). Check out the pictures below for some ideas, too.
4. **Improve your design.** Once you've created something useful, think about how you can make it even better. Ask someone else for an opinion if you can't think of ideas yourself. Make changes to your invention until you think it's the best possible.
5. **Give your invention a name.** Be creative and think about a clever name for your new invention. Then share your invention with friends and family members.

