

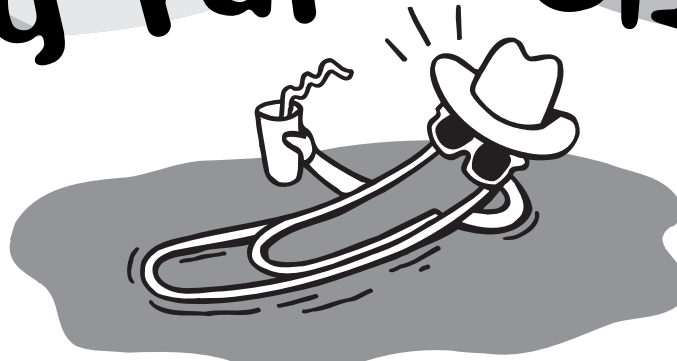


Can you get a paper clip to float?

# Floating Paper Clip

## What You Need

- cup of water
- 2 paper clips
- paper towel



**1 Drop** a paper clip into a cup of water. What happens?

**2 Tear** off a piece of paper towel that is **slightly larger** than the paper clip.

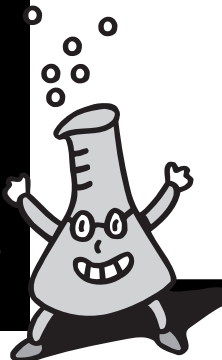
**3 Place** the piece of paper towel on top of the water.

**4 Gently place** the second paper clip on the piece of paper towel.

**5 Wait** a few seconds. **Now what happens?**

## Science Scoop

If you drop a paper clip in water, the paper clip **sinks**. If you put the paper clip on a piece of paper towel, the paper towel sinks but the paper clip **floats**. **Water molecules** are **attracted** to each other in all directions, making them “**stick**” together. However, the water molecules at the surface “stick” only to molecules **next to** and **below** them because there are none above them. This makes the surface act as if it had a thin “**skin**.” This is called **surface tension**. The paper towel helps you to lower the paper clip onto the surface gently without **breaking** the surface tension. If you are very careful, you can float the paper clip on the water without using the paper towel.



Sent in by Katherine L. of Alberta, Canada and Lauren W. of Havertown, PA



Now it's time for you to **experiment**. What happens if you add a drop of liquid **soap** to the water while the paper clip is floating? Or, what happens if you put the paper clip in **another liquid**, like vegetable oil or soda water? Choose **one thing** to change (that's the variable), and make a **prediction**. Then **test it** and send your results to ZOOM.



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