

To Flush or Not To Flush



Every day, the Service Authority cleans millions of gallons of wastewater – that's what we call water after people have used it then sent it down the drain or the toilet. Sometimes, stuff is flushed down the toilet that can clog the pipes that take wastewater from houses to the treatment plant where water gets clean again. In this experiment you will see what happens inside of the sewers when "un-flushable" items are flushed.

Hypothesis

You will be creating three "sewer" tanks, one with toilet paper, one with a wet wipe and one with cotton swabs or cotton balls. Write down your hypothesis, or guess, about what will happen when each of these items is left in water for seven days.

Materials

- 3 clear containers with lids
- Toilet paper
- Wet wipe or a similar type of cleaning wipe



- Cotton swabs or cotton balls
- Water
- Sharpie or expo marker

Experiment

Create Your "Sewers"

1. Gather all of your materials.
2. Fill each clear container two inches from the top with water.
3. Place each of your test items, toilet paper, wet wipes, and cotton swabs, into its own container.
4. Using your sharpie, label your "sewers" to help you remember what item is inside.
5. Put the lid on each container and leave them somewhere safe where they will be undisturbed.
6. Over the next seven days, observe what happens inside of each "sewer."
7. On days two, five, and seven, give each jar a gentle shake and record your observations.

This experiment has a video companion at <https://www.pwcsa.org/h2go-kids>

The only things that should ever be flushed are pee, poop and toilet paper!

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Observations

| | Sewer Jar 1 | Sewer Jar 2 | Sewer Jar 3 |
|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Day 2 | | | |
| Day 5 | | | |
| Day 7 | | | |



What were the main differences in each sewer by the end of the experiment?

Extra Fun: Be a Researcher!

Research what is different about how toilet paper is made versus wet wipes and why that means they can cause clogs in pipes.

What is it called when a large mass of fat and other trash create a clog in a pipe?