Student practical activities at home

Posted by Anonymous on Thu, 2020-04-02 13:45

Student practical activities at home: Can students take chemicals and equipment home to enable them to conduct practical activities/experiments in the home environment?

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Answer by labsupport on question Student practical activities at home

Submitted by sat on 02 April 2020

Answer reviewed 27 February 2023

Science ASSIST strongly advises against chemicals or specialised equipment being sent home for student activities.

Most secondary school science activities are not suited to the home environment, with the risks outweighing the benefits.

It is currently a difficult time with school closures and online learning, but schools are still responsible for the safety of their students for any activities that they are directing, even if remotely.

Chemicals and specialised equipment

These must not be sent home with students for science practical activities for the following reasons

The use of hazardous chemicals requires:

- student supervision from trained science staff/personnel
- access to safety data sheets
- access to appropriate PPE
- access to first aid facilities
- specialist transport and disposal processes

Specialist equipment:

- is often expensive and can be fragile, so is susceptible to being lost, stolen or broken
- may be desirable for inappropriate use, e.g. high precision electronic balances are listed as an item sought by people in the illegal drug manufacture

The home environment has several limitations:

- adult supervision may be limited, if at all.
- there may be younger (or disabled) siblings to consider.
- students sometimes do unpredictable things, even if prompted by curiosity.
- students and probably their at home supervisors don't have sufficient understanding of the hazardous properties or risks of using chemicals and/or the correct use of specialist equipment.

Science ASSIST recommends that any activities conducted in the home setting are limited to the use of low hazard, household type products such as would be used in primary science activities:

- These are inherently safer.
- They are more easily sourced from the home or supermarket.
- They can still be used to investigate complex science concepts.

This may need some creativity as there is also no access to specialist equipment at home.
