
Rock Collection Starter Kit: An Egg Carton Science Project

Nature | All Year | Ages 4-7

My daughter came home with six rocks in her pockets last week. Again. Instead of washing them and tossing them back outside, we turned her collection habit into an actual project. Turns out, an egg carton makes a perfect rock museum.

What You Need

- One empty egg carton (12-cup)
 - Permanent marker or label maker
 - Small notebook or index cards
 - Magnifying glass (optional, but kids love it)
 - A bucket or bag for collecting

How It Works

Tell your kid the mission: find 12 different rocks. Not just any rocks — they need to look different from each other. Different colors, different textures, different weights.

Step 1: Go for a walk. We hit up Loose Park because the paths have great variety, but honestly? Your driveway, a parking lot, the playground — rocks are everywhere. The goal is different, not exotic.

Step 2: As you collect, talk about what makes each rock special. Is it smooth? Bumpy? Heavy for its size? Does it have sparkly bits? Let them touch everything. This is hands-on science.

Step 3: Back home, wash the rocks. Then comes the fun part — arranging them in the egg carton. Each rock gets its own cup.

Step 4: Number each cup with the marker (1-12). Then create labels on index cards or in the notebook: Rock #1, where you found it, what it looks like. Keep it simple. "Gray and smooth, from the creek at Penguin Park."

The Science Bit

Once you've got your collection, try the scratch test. Sedimentary rocks (like sandstone or limestone) are usually softer — you can sometimes scratch them with your fingernail or a penny. Igneous rocks (like granite) are harder and won't scratch as easily.

We tested ours on the driveway. The kids were shocked when some rocks left marks and others didn't. That's the whole point — geology is just noticing differences.

What We Learned

The egg carton makes kids take it seriously. It's not just rocks in a bucket anymore — it's a collection. My four-year-old checks on his rocks daily. He's added descriptions like "shiny one" and "the red guy."

Also: this project has legs. You can keep collecting, swap out rocks for better specimens, or start a second carton for a different category (all smooth rocks, all sparkly rocks, all rocks from one location).

And if you're near Shawnee Mission Park or anywhere along the Blue River Trail, you'll find great rock variety. Creeks are gold mines for this.

One carton. Twelve rocks. Done. No craft store run required.

