

Make Your Own River

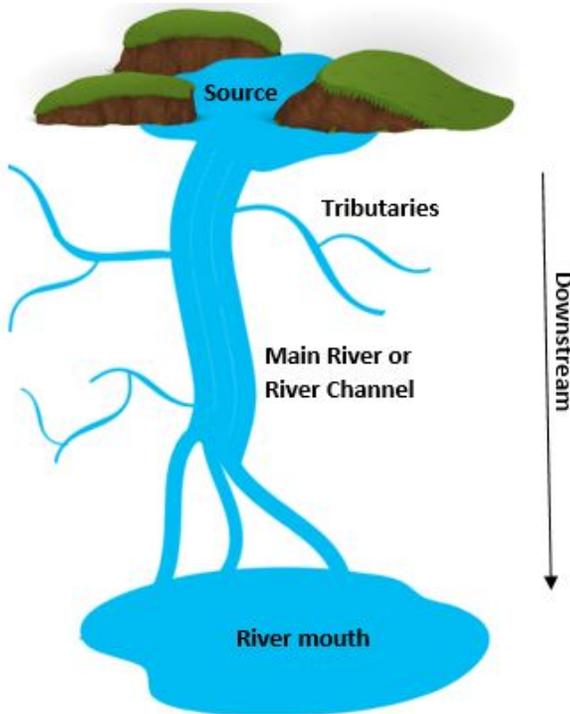
Learn the anatomy, or parts of a river by building your own! Then experiment with things like pollution, river bends, and speed.

Ages 6 and up with adult supervision

Location At home, outdoors, or in the bathtub!

Materials Needed

- aluminum foil
- bucket
- pitcher of water or garden hose
- small things that float such as plastic lids, toy boat
- soil, sand, small stones
- food coloring (optional) or other colored liquid to simulate pollution



Background Info/Quick Facts

A **river** is a moving body of water that originates from a source at a high elevation and flows downstream to body of water at a lower elevation.

A **tributary** is a stream or river that flows into another stream or river.

A **confluence** is the point at which the tributary and main stream or river meet.

The **mouth** is the end point of the river where it flows into a lake or ocean.

The speed of the water can be influenced by many things like rain or snow melt, bends in the river channel, and even water brought in by tributaries.

Speed is important when transporting things like boats, but also for transporting silt from land, seeds from aquatic plants, even pollution.

Share a pic on social media when you do this activity!
[#CelebrateTheStJoe](#)

Instructions: Create your river

Find a sloped area such as a mowed grassy hillside in your yard. Or, make a slope by stacking boxes or empty plastic container on a table or in the bathtub.

Unroll the aluminum foil to the length you want your river to be.



Fold and roll the edges to make a lip that to keep the water within your foil river bed. This lip will act as your riverbank- like the land on either side of a river.

Set a bucket at the bottom or lowest point of your river to collect water from your river. The bucket is Lake Michigan (where the St. Joseph River flows to).

Test for leaks by gently pouring a small amount of water from your pitcher at the high point of your river, or set your garden hose on a very low flow, and let the water trickle down. Re-fold or add more foil if you notice any leaks.

Recycle the water that collects at your river mouth in the bucket to your pitcher.

Experiment with your river

Set your floats at the top of the river. Pour water into the river and let the floats race down.

Place a small amount of sand or soil at the top of your river. Pour in some water. What happens if you pour in slowly or fast? Or if you place the soil on the sides of your river, or near the bottom? What happens to your river once you add water?

Make your river into a tributary! Using more aluminum foil and some creativity, can you figure out how to make your river a tributary flowing into another foil river? Can you create a bend in your river?

Experiment with pollution by adding a drop or two food coloring as you pour the clear water. Does it change the color of the entire river?

Want to Learn More?

The Elkhart River Restoration Inc. website has information about characteristics of a healthy river, and information about river access sites and watershed information related to the Elkhart River.

<http://www.elkhartriverrestorationassociation.org/river-education/how-healthy-rivers-work/>

Find out how sediment pollution affects rivers and waterways. http://smithfieldri.com/pdf/engineer/ksmo_sediment.pdf

Tips on how you can protect rivers and streams near you!

<https://www.marc.org/Environment/Water-Resources/pdfs/brochures/streambro.aspx>

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