

Science Box from ZLIFE Education

Science Box from ZLIFE Education is a box comprising four experiments around a scientific concept. The box contains all the apparatus and instructions necessary to conduct simple experiments at home that will introduce and explain scientific concepts to children. A sample of the topics that these experiments touch on includes rocketry, acids and bases, electricity, batteries, etc.

The objective of the Science Box is to explain scientific concepts to children and reinforce them through hands-on involvement and experimentation. Each box comprises the apparatus and tools needed for the experiments, safety gear, an Activity Guide (explaining the concept), and instruction sheets that include images. According to the manufacturer, the Science Box is intended for children between the ages of 7 and 12.



Availability

This box is available on order. Interested parents can subscribe online by visiting <http://www.zlifeeducation.com/> and the box will be delivered to your doorstep (anywhere in India and internationally as well) on a monthly basis, with each box presenting a different concept.

Pricing

Each box is priced at INR 1500 (this includes shipping), but different subscription plans are available for 3-, 6- and 12-month subscriptions, which lower the cost per box.

What we like

- That the box arrives with all the apparatus necessary for the experiments, such as test tubes, bread boards, wires, chemicals, etc. All you need to supply from home are things that are easily available—scissors, colours, etc. This makes it easy for the child and the parent, doing away with the need to visit a store or track down the requisite material.
- The Activity Guide that accompanies each box and clearly explains the scientific concepts. This booklet will help the child understand different aspects of the concept. For example, the Activity Guide for the box 'Chemistry and Colours' explains what acids and bases are, how they can be identified and marked on a pH colour chart, how they react to form different compounds, etc. The explanations are simple, and even a young child who has not been introduced to these topics in school can understand them at a basic level.
- That each box has four experiments that are sufficiently different from each other and explore the concept using a variety of approaches. In the 'Electronics & Circuitry' box for instance, a child can learn how to complete a circuit and power a motor in different ways, learn to read voltage, use LEDs, etc.
- The quality of the materials used, which are very good. Science Box uses real, working apparatus that will excite your children—this is not a toy!



What can be improved

- The instructions can be difficult to follow. The accompanying visuals are merely screen shots from the YouTube demonstration videos, and are not very effective in clarifying any doubts that arise from the unclear instructions. The YouTube videos, in turn, are too fast-paced to allow a child to comprehend exactly what needs to be done. Ideally, instructional videos should be slow enough to allow children to follow in a step-by-step manner, but these videos move fast and the child can get confused.

- The instructions include a lot of minutiae that can be daunting for younger users and make the process tedious for them—"measure out 2 cm of tape", "mark off 5 cm from the edge of a sheet", etc.
- Some of the apparatus doesn't quite work right. While the tools supplied are all of good quality, they sometimes do not work as they are meant to—a

valve that does not completely seal off the opening and allows gas to escape; wooden skewers that are not long enough to allow free movement, and so on. Often, the result is a little less effective than what is shown on the YouTube video. This can be disappointing to children as well.

Recommendation

The product concept is great—to introduce children to scientific concepts through hands-on experimentation. And the biggest benefit is that everything is delivered to you at home in a simple box. However, the quality of the instructions and videos needs to be improved to allow for ease of use. Younger children, especially, cannot conduct the experiments without extensive help from adults, who pretty much end up doing everything themselves. For this reason and for the fact that the concepts that are explored are quite complex, we would recommend this product for children who are 10+ years of age, rather than the stated 7.



Testimonials

"I like this product a lot—it engages my children and keeps them away from TV. They like the hands-on experience that it provides. While the level is a little high for my children, it is at least useful in developing their interest in science. It teaches science in a way that schools don't!" – Darshini Vimal, Delhi, two children aged 8 and 10.

"The concept is good and the experiments are interesting. My son is able to follow all the instructions and conduct the experiments on his own. He finds the YouTube video easy to follow. But the packaging can be better. Also, some of the experiments don't work as shown in the video. I would still recommend this product to parents who are looking for some educational activity for their children that is also fun." – Gita Yadav, Delhi, one son aged 10.

"While the concept is promising, the instructions are complex for younger children to follow. Setting up each experiment is a cumbersome process and requires adult help and supervision. The YouTube videos are too short and of not much help either. The product needs to be simplified to be more effective. On the other hand, the experiments are fun and a great way to reinforce concepts. The quality of the material and apparatus is very good." – Ankur Sharma, Gurgaon, one son aged 7.

- Kritika Srinivasan

