



Spaghetti Bridge

Primary Audience: 5th-7th Grade

Description: Investigate the differences between the strength of bridges made from flat and round building materials

Keywords: Spaghetti, support, structure

Concepts:

- Different shapes give structures different stabilities. Circles and triangles are some of the strongest shapes in nature.

Materials:

- 8 Marshmallows
- 18 pieces of raw spaghetti
- 4 pieces of raw linguine (spaghetti and linguine should be the same width)
- 1 paper clip
- 1 envelope and a pair of scissors (to make hanging basket for coins)
- Approximately 40 coins
- Paper and pencil to record observations

Instructions:

1. Cut off the lower corner of the envelope for your coin basket.
2. Unbend one end of the paper clip to make a hanger and poke it through the top of your coin basket.
3. Construct two pyramids of equal size with your marshmallows and spaghetti.
4. Connect the pyramids with a single strand of spaghetti.
5. Hang your coin basket from the bridging piece of spaghetti.
6. Add coins, one at a time, to the basket.
7. Record the number of coins in the basket at the time the bridging spaghetti breaks.
8. Repeat the experiment three more times to get an average number of pennies needed to break the spaghetti bridge.
9. How do you think the results will change if you use linguine for the bridge instead?
10. Test your hypothesis by repeating the experiment with the linguine as the bridge.
11. Was the round (spaghetti) or flat (linguine) shape stronger?

Possible Interactive Questions:

Engineering:

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What's Going On?

Circles are among the strongest shapes in nature. External stress distributes itself evenly throughout a round structure. Spaghetti has a shape like a cylinder, while linguini is shaped like a flattened rectangle. A piece of spaghetti has the same strength in any direction it is bent. Linguini will bend more easily in one orientation than another.

Be sure to experiment using pieces of spaghetti and linguini with similar diameters. And try orienting each piece of linguini in the same direction; this will produce a more uniform strength throughout the structure.

Further Exploration:

- 1.

Relevant Ohio Science Content Standards: