

Sensing the Universe

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We have developed different constructivist hands-on activities to communicate astronomy through five different senses. Our activities involve smelling and tasting different molecules that have been found in the Universe and pairing them to astrophysical phenomena after being given some clues; touching meteorites and learning about physical characteristics of objects; hearing and feeling vibrations of energy released by astronomical objects in different wavelengths; or seeing cosmic particles, either photons through a telescope or electrons through cloud chambers. First, the activities have proven to be very successful in catching the public's attention, especially smell and taste, which are not usually associated with the Universe; secondly, they are easily implemented with very diverse audiences. Our experience with more than 2,000 people — including those with physical disabilities, non-native speakers, juvenile delinquents, or very young audiences — have resulted in amazed reactions on learning about the Universe in a new and exciting way.