Gather

- Large cake pan
- Water
- Cooking oil
- Small plastic animal
- Dish soap
- Spoon
- Cotton balls
- Paper towels

Let's Experiment!

1. Fill the cake pan with water.
2. Add 2 tablespoons of cooking oil to the middle of the pan and observe how the oil and water interact.
3. Put the animal in the oil for about 1 minute, then take out and wipe off.
4. It will still be oily, try rinsing with water alone. What happens?
5. Try using dish soap and water. Does this work better? Find out why this is here.
6. Try to remove the oil from the water - use the spoon, paper towel, cotton balls, or soap.

How Does it Work?

We learned that absorption and removal are the approaches that are used when dealing with actual oil spills in our environment. Scientists are working on some very cool inventions for oil spill clean-up, such as using milkweed to absorb the oil or using floating vacuum cleaners to remove the oil. Which way worked the best in your experiment? Which took the longest? Which removed the most oil?

Take it Further!

Use the online resources below to explore what happens to the environment after a spill - specifically how oil affects a bird's ability to fly, swim, or stay warm. Try dragging a real or faux feather through your oil spill, what happens? Use soap and water to try to clean the feather. What's the best washing method for getting the feather oil-free again? For more ideas and information, visit:

https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/oilimpacts.html
https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/the-big-questions/these-new-devices-could-stop-oil-spills-their-tracks-n734536