

Do your skills of observation really matter when it comes to describing and classifying matter? You bet they do! Scientists rely heavily on their senses and reasoning abilities as well. Conduct the following thinking activities as you explore the properties of matter.



Describing Properties

1. Gather the following materials: ice cube; samples of M&M's® candy, maple syrup, grape soda, lemon extract.
2. Using your five senses, explore each item.
3. Record your observations in the chart below. Use a simile to describe each item. For example, to describe a feather, you might say it feels as "soft as cotton."

	ice cube	M&M's®	maple syrup	grape soda	lemon extract
Looks as...					
Smells as...					
Tastes as...					
Sounds as...					
Feels as...					

Classifying by Property

1. Read the list of solid objects below. Explore each item in your imagination using your five senses. paper green desk table chair lettuce leaf stick broom
2. Next read the five properties listed below. One descriptive category that could be written for the property of color is "as green as an emerald." Which of the solid objects listed above could you place in this category? You might have said, "Grass, lettuce, and leaf," because they are all green objects.
COLOR SIZE SHAPE WEIGHT TEXTURE
3. On the back of this page, write a descriptive category for each of the five properties. Then list objects, from the list above, that would fit under that description.
4. Share and compare your categories with those of your classmates.

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Note to Teacher: Provide small samples of the items listed in "Describing Properties" for each student or small group of students. The list of items includes solids (ice cube/candy), liquid (syrup and soda), and a gas (lemon extract). The essence of lemon is concentrated in an alcohol-based liquid so very volatile and evaporates quickly. Therefore, the students are experiencing the gas, not the liquid.