

Classroom Activity

10 Big Question: Where will the Nanoscience revolution take us?



Exciting Plasma

You can turn the gas in a light bulb into a plasma using static electricity instead of plugging it in to an electric socket.

Things you need:

- Fluorescent light bulb or tube
- Balloon
- A dark room
- A full head of hair

Warning: Be careful with extremely fragile fluorescent lights bulbs or tubes in the dark. Make sure you have shoes on.

What you do:

- Darken the room.
- Hold the fluorescent bulb in one hand and the balloon in the other.
- Rub the balloon vigorously on your hair.
- Bring the balloon near the bulb and watch what happens.
- Move the balloon up and down the bulb without touching the bulb.
- Move the balloon slowly toward the glass until it almost touches and see if you can get a spark to jump.

This classroom activity was suggested by Rachel Crees – PhD student in the School of Chemistry & Physics, University of Adelaide.