

“GOLD” PANNING VOLUNTEER GUIDE

General guidelines and information.

Volunteers are encouraged to tailor presentations based upon their knowledge, experience, and student interests.

OVERVIEW: Read or summarize the background information. After that, demonstrate how to pan for gold and set the group loose to try for themselves. Help the students identify minerals from the poster board and by using magnets. **Do not give magnets to children or parents. Only volunteers should hold on to the magnets.** You will have 5 groups for 20 minutes each. Cleanup at 2 minute warning.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Prospectors panned for gold using pans and techniques that we will show you today. The “pans” that you will be using are actually aluminum pie tins. Real gold panning pans are made of steel and are much heavier, often with slight steps or ribs (riffles) on one side to aid in separation of materials.

Pyrite: We use pyrite or “fool’s gold” instead of real gold. Real gold is heavy and very soft or malleable (can be bent or thinned easily). Pyrite fractures (breaks up) easily and smells like sulfur.

Other Minerals: There are other minerals that can be found in the gold panning troughs (a poster board in the room shows examples, although some minerals may show up that are not on the poster). The volunteers will help you identify the minerals you find. Volunteers also have magnets to help find the magnetite that may be hiding in your pan.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

All the students must surround and spread out around the troughs so everyone has enough room to gold pan at the same time. Hand out pans to the group, stressing that they must wait until everyone in the group has a pan.

Demonstrate gold panning to the group

Slowly dip your pan in the water and get a medium size amount of material (so that you have plenty of room in the pan). Slowly swish the pan in a circular motion (swirling technique). Next, slowly pour out water removing the lighter sediments. Repeat to remove additional sediment. If more water is needed, slowly submerge the pan. Set the students loose to try for themselves. We usually do a countdown from 3. . . . 2 1. . . . Go!

Mineral Collecting Rules

Once the students have removed unwanted sediment, they can go to one of the tables that surround the gold panning trough to collect their minerals from the pan. Any rocks that are found in the pan, they can keep. Each table has plastic zip-lock bags for their treasures. Have them or parent volunteers write their name on the bag with a Sharpie.

- **Do not** take all of the sediment or sand that you have panned. Other schools that follow your group need that material to pan with.
- **Do not** take water; you can get water at home to clean your rocks
- **Only take the pretties!**

CLEAN UP RULES @ 2-minute Warning

The students will have approximately 20 minutes to gold pan. Once the 2-minute warning is called **everyone must stop what they are doing and clean their pans**. This is done by dipping the pan into the water trough to wash off the sediment. After this is done, have them return their pan to a volunteer. There are paper towels to clean up with and dry hands.

