



Frequently Asked Questions about Spark!Lab

What is Spark!Lab?

Spark!Lab is a hands-on invention activity center where visitors learn that invention is a process and that everyone is inventive. Activities incorporate history, science, engineering, technology, and art. A visit to Spark!Lab “sparks” imagination and curiosity, and can be the first step to exploring invention in the world around us and our own inventiveness.

Where is Spark!Lab?

Spark!Lab is located on 1 West of the National Museum of American History on the National Mall.

What are Spark!Lab’s hours?

Spark!Lab is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Spark!Lab is open every day except December 25.

What age group should visit Spark!Lab? Are there age restrictions on who can visit?

Visitors of all ages are invited to visit Spark!Lab; there are no age restrictions. Most activities in the room have been designed for children ages 6-12, though younger and older visitors can also learn from the wide range of activities. Spark!Lab has a section designed especially for children under the age of 5 and their parents/caregivers, though these children are invited to explore the rest of Spark!Lab under adult supervision.

Do you offer school programs in Spark!Lab?

We do not offer scheduled school programs in Spark!Lab, although you are invited to visit with your group. Groups are admitted on a space-available basis. If your group is larger than 15 students, we recommend that you split into smaller groups and rotate through Spark!Lab and several other exhibitions in the Museum. For more information about planning your group visit, please contact us at sparklab@si.edu or see <http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/educators/visiting.cfm>.

Do you offer birthday parties in Spark!Lab?

We do not offer birthday party programs in Spark!Lab, although you are welcome to visit Spark!Lab with a party. Your group will be admitted on a space-available basis. Please note, outside food for your party may not be brought into the Museum.

Can I rent out Spark!Lab?

Spark!Lab cannot be rented for groups or events.

Who can participate in the lab bench experiments?

Anyone is welcome to participate in the lab bench activities. For safety reasons, children under the age of 5 must have an adult with them at the bench.

When do you offer lab bench experiments?

We offer experiments at 11:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m., although we reserve the right to alter the schedule based on visitation and/or other programs and events happening in the Museum on a given day. Stop by Spark!Lab when you visit to confirm the experiment schedule for that day.

Can I leave my children in Spark!Lab while I explore the rest of the Museum?

Children under the age of 13 must have an adult with them in Spark!Lab.

What is the maximum capacity in Spark!Lab?

Spark!Lab can accommodate up to 45 people (children and adults) at one time. The capacity was set according to Smithsonian life safety standards.

Where can I buy the toys and furniture that are in the under 5 area?

A full listing of sources for the under 5 toys and furniture is available. Please e-mail us at sparklab@si.edu for more information.

Where can I buy the straw building toys that are part of the Shaping Spaces activity kit?

The straw building toys are called Straws and Connectors. They are manufactured by Roylco and are available at many online retailers.

Can I volunteer in Spark!Lab?

Spark!Lab relies on volunteers to stay open and running smoothly. Please e-mail us at sparklab@si.edu for more information about how you can become a volunteer.