



Scotch Tape

Performer's Version

Safety Hazards

- Personal Protective Equipment

○ None required.

Materials

- Roll of Scotch Magic Tape

Procedure

1. Tear two pieces of scotch tape from the roll.
2. Fold an end of each piece into a short tab.
3. Observe how the sticky side of the pieces of tape will initially repel each other.
4. Stick one piece of tape onto the dull end of the other piece of tape.
5. Separate the two pieces of tape by quickly ripping them apart, holding onto the tabs.
6. Bring the two pieces of tape close together again, they should now attract each other and perform a sort of "high five" maneuver.

Pedagogy & Supplemental Information

The scotch tape demonstration is a fascinating illustration of electrostatics, particularly the phenomena of charge separation and transfer. Initially, when the sticky sides of two pieces of tape are brought close to each other, they repel due to similar surface charges, likely negative charges accumulated from previous interactions or manufacturing processes. However, when one piece of tape is adhered to the dull side of the other and quickly ripped apart, an intriguing electrostatic effect occurs. The rapid separation leads to charge transfer between the surfaces. The sticky side, now stripped from the dull side, often becomes positively charged, while the dull side retains a negative charge. Consequently, the sticky sides of the two pieces of tape now attract each other due to opposite charges.

This demonstration showcases key principles of electrostatics, including the concepts of charge induction, separation, and attraction. When the tapes are ripped apart, the adhesive side, having lost electrons to the dull side, becomes positively charged, while the dull side, gaining electrons, becomes negatively charged. The attraction observed is a direct consequence of Coulomb's Law, which states that opposite charges attract. This phenomenon is also a tangible example of triboelectric charging, where different materials become electrically charged through friction and separation.

In the broader context, this simple demonstration connects to larger topics such as material science, surface chemistry, and everyday electrostatic phenomena. Understanding charge interactions is crucial in numerous applications, from designing antistatic materials and improving adhesive technologies to developing electronic devices that minimize electrostatic discharge. Additionally, this concept is vital in understanding natural phenomena like lightning, where charge separation occurs on a grand scale, leading to powerful electrostatic discharges. The scotch tape demonstration, therefore, serves as a microcosm of fundamental electrostatic principles that have significant implications in both technological advancements and natural processes.