What is corn silk for?

When you peel open an ear of corn, there are lots of soft, shiny threads inside, called corn silk. What is all that silk for?



Why?

1. **The tassel makes pollen.**
   At the very top of the corn plant is a spiky, feathery part called the tassel. It makes pollen, a fine yellow dust. When the wind blows, the pollen floats off and drifts down through the air.
2. **Each silk is a catcher's mitt.**
   Out of the top of the baby ear comes the silk, like a fluffy little ponytail. Each silk thread waits for a grain of pollen.
3. **One silk, one kernel!**
   Each silk thread is connected to one spot inside the ear, where one kernel can grow. When a grain of pollen lands on it, it sends a tiny tube all the way down the silk, and the kernel knows it's time to grow!

Try it! Count the rows

You need: corn on the cob

1. Next time you have corn on the cob, count the rows all the way around.
2. Is it an even number?
3. If you get to peel one, look at how many silk threads there are!

What happened? Almost every ear of corn has an even number of rows, like fourteen, sixteen, or eighteen!

Video + more questions:
whywhywhykids.com/corn

scan with a grown-up