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This diagram shows the formation of a tomato bushy stunt virus particle. Just like many other important biological structures, the virus capsid forms spontaneously through a process of self-assembly. Such processes are characterized by random encounters between subunits, upon which the subunits may "stick" to each other if their complementary surfaces come into contact. New additions lead to the formation of increasingly stable complexes, which increases the likelihood of further assembly. Through the seemingly simple scheme in the figure, a wide array of concepts are depicted, from the structure of a protein monomer, through the gradual buildup of a "shell" around the viral RNA, all the way to a completed virus particle. The complexity of the structure is further emphasized by using colors to indicate that identical monomer subunits end up in similar yet slightly different (quasi-equivalent) configurations. The article by Höst and coworkers (page 471) focuses on students' learning about the self-assembly process. The main conclusion is that an interactive, tangible 3D model appears to support an understanding of the randomness of the process and other dynamic facets of biomolecular self-assembly. (Image credit: courtesy of Stephen Harrison)