

Pushes and pulls move things



Lesson at a glance

Open with one pull toy beside you: give it a gentle pull, then a gentle push, and ask how the toy started moving — do not name the words yet. Teach push and pull with a live model on a soft ball and a string toy. Groups then play on the floor with one soft ball and one pull toy each, naming push or pull after every try. Carpet share has three or four children show an action while the class choruses the word. Close with display-only partner talk on everyday pushes and pulls.

Learning objectives

- Use a push or a pull to start, stop or change how something moves
- Name whether they used a push or a pull
- With support, say one thing that changed (start, stop, faster or turn)

Before the bell – prep

Clear safe floor space for four to six groups of three to four. Set out one soft ball and one pull toy (small box or bag with a short string works) per group so every child can try both. Keep only the demo pull toy beside you at the start; lay floor kits out for the play step.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
soft ball	1	group	classroom	a pair of rolled-up socks
pull toy (small box or bag with a short string, or a pull-along animal on wheels)	1	group	classroom	a small cardboard box with a string taped on as a pull handle
clear floor space for safe rolling	1	class	classroom	a short corridor space with an adult at each end
picture of a builder pushing a wheelbarrow (IWB image or simple printed photo)	1	class	classroom	teacher mimes pushing a wheelbarrow if no picture is available

Safety watch-point

Push and pull gently; roll balls away from feet and faces; no throwing; keep short strings away from necks; leave clear space between groups.



Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Have only the pull toy ready. Pull it gently toward you, then push it away. Ask how it started moving and take a few ideas. Keep this short and curious — materials stay away until the play step.
- **Push or pull?:** Hold up the soft ball and ask which will start it rolling. Model once: push the ball away and say that is a push; pull the string toy toward you and say that is a pull. Do not list start, stop, faster or turn on the board — save those as oral stretch on the floor.
- **Push and pull play:** Groups sit or kneel with room to roll. Every child completes at least one push on the ball and one pull on the string toy in about 12 minutes. Stay mobile and ask 'Was that a push or a pull?' For ready children only, add 'What changed — start, stop, faster, or turn?' Watch for gentle rolls and safe spacing.
- **What did we notice?:** Invite three or four children to show or mime one floor action; the class choruses push or pull. If someone mixes them up, re-model with the ball: hands move away = push; hands bring the toy toward or along with you = pull. Stretch the change words only with children who are ready. This is oral only — no Investigation Journal page.
- **Who uses pushes and pulls?:** Show the builder-with-wheelbarrow picture and name it as a push; mime pulling a trolley as a pull. Anchor in today's play, then partner talk: one push and one pull from play or a shared example (buggy, bag on wheels). Keep it oral — no written reflection.

What it should show

Most children will correctly name a push (ball rolled away) and a pull (string toy came toward or with them). Ready children may also say start, stop, faster or turn. If a child calls every move a push, re-ask whether hands moved it away or brought it closer — that usually sorts it.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Any movement counts as a push — 'I pushed it' even when they tugged the string toward themselves.** — Ask: did your hands push it away, or pull it toward you or along with you? Re-model both actions side by side with the ball and the string toy.
- **Stopping the ball is not a push or pull — 'I just put my hand there.'** — Name it gently: your hand pushed against the ball to stop it. Invite them to try a soft stop again and say push.



Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Stay at the teacher group and only require the words push or pull after a modelled turn on the ball or string toy. • Let the child point to the action while you supply the word, then have them echo it.	• Ask the stretch prompt orally: what changed — start, stop, faster, or turn? • Invite a soft side push on the ball to make it turn and name the push.	• Compare a bigger push and a smaller push on the ball and say which went further. • In carpet share, give a reason when agreeing or gently correcting a peer's push/pull label.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to oral language — children chorus push or pull and tell a partner one everyday example.