

Loud and quiet sounds

Lesson at a glance

Open with a soft clap then a louder clap, and the same contrast on one ready drum, asking only what changed. Pupils predict whether a soft or hard hit is louder, mark it on the Investigation Journal page, then in groups hit the same drum or tin-with-skin softly and harder, listening from one spot and feeling the bounce. The sound-explorer interactive on the IWB shows bigger rings for a harder hit while it still sounds like a drum. They record soft vs hard and an “I found out...” stem, then name loud and quiet places around school.

Learning objectives

- Predict and test how to make the same sound louder or quieter
- Link a harder tap to a bigger wobble and a louder sound

Before the bell – prep

Night before: stretch cling film or a balloon skin tight on one tin per small group (or set out real drums). Put Investigation Journal pages on desks before the bell. Open the sound-explorer interactive on the drum scene. Clear space so groups are not ear-to-ear.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
classroom drum or tin with cling film (membrane skin)	1	group	school kit	empty biscuit tin with a balloon skin or stretchy bag stretched over the top and secured with a rubber band
shaker (optional listen-only loud/quiet check)	1	group	school kit	sealed pot with a few dry rice grains or pasta pieces
elastic-band guitar (box or tub with elastic bands stretched across; optional extension)	1	group	classroom	single thick elastic band stretched over a sturdy book or empty tissue box
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	plain paper with predict / observe / find out headings written by the teacher



Safety watch-point

Gentle hits only, away from faces; no banging near ears. Keep whole-class volume friendly — stop any group striking too hard.



Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Sound one soft clap, then one clearly louder clap, and ask only “What changed?” Surface harder hit, bigger movement, more energy. Give one soft and one harder hit on the ready drum so they hear the same instrument change volume, then ask how we could make this drum quieter or louder. Stay with louder/quieter — no pitch, tune or note words yet.
- **What do you predict?:** Pose: which is louder on the same drum, a soft hit or a hard hit? Take three or four predictions with “Why?” and “What will your hand do differently?” Note short phrases on the board. In about 30 seconds each pupil marks quiet/loud face or soft/hard on the Journal page before any kit goes out.
- **Soft hit, hard hit:** Model once: same drum or tin, same place, soft then hard. Groups try while you circulate asking what they heard and what their finger felt on the skin. If a group only bangs, reset to three soft then three harder hits with listening between. Hands-on and talk only — no Journal writing in this window. Keep hits gentle and away from ears.
- **See the bigger wobble:** Open sound-explorer in explore mode on the drum scene; move quiet → medium → loud and spell out that the rings get bigger but it still sounds like a drum. Ask “Did the sound get louder?” then “Does it still sound like a drum?” Now name the link: harder hit → bigger wobble → louder sound; loud is not the same as high. Use the worked model aloud to join their test to the idea.
- **Record what you noticed:** Re-read two or three board predictions first. Pupils show soft vs hard with faces or words and finish “I found out...” Support with stems said aloud. Look for the pre-test mark, a soft/hard comparison, and a simple harder-hit / bigger-wobble / louder link.
- **Loud and quiet around us:** Display-only talk for the full three minutes — do not pack instruments yet. Draw out whisper vs school bell, library footsteps vs yard ball, soft rain on the window vs wind outside. Revoice: softer hit, smaller wobble, quieter sound. Stay with force of hit; leave muffling for another day.



What it should show

Harder hits sound louder and the skin feels a bigger bounce; softer hits are quieter with a smaller bounce. It should still sound like the same kind of drum, not a different instrument. A group that says it went “higher” is mixing volume with pitch — have the class listen again for loudness only. A limp skin that barely wobbles usually needs re-stretching.



Misconceptions & interventions

- **“Louder means higher” — pupils mix volume with pitch and say the hard hit went up.** — Keep the language locked on louder/quieter. Replay soft then hard on the same drum and ask only which was stronger to hear, not higher or lower. Point to the interactive rings growing while it still sounds like a drum.
- **“A louder sound is a different kind of sound” — as if the hard hit makes a new instrument.** — Ask “Does it still sound like a drum?” after both hits. Use the sound-explorer drum scene to show bigger wobble rings with the same drum sound.
- **Pupils only bang hard and never compare, so they miss the soft-vs-hard link.** — Stop the group and reset: three soft hits, three harder hits, same spot, listen between each. Ask what the finger felt after each hit.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair at the teacher table with a shared drum; adult models soft then hard while the pupil feels the skin and points to quiet/loud faces on the Journal. • Accept face marks and a spoken “I found out...” scribed by an adult or peer.	• Prompt a second listen from the same spot and ask them to say which hit made the bigger bounce under the finger. • Add one everyday example on the Journal stem (e.g. school bell vs whisper).	• Challenge: explain why the sound is still a drum sound even when louder — using bigger wobble, not a new instrument. • If elastic-band guitars are already out as optional extension, try a soft vs stronger pluck and say whether the same bigger-wobble idea fits.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to Music listening — same classroom drum played soft and strong, describing volume without pitch words.