

materials

Sorting our materials



Lesson at a glance

Hold up a real tray of classroom objects and ask whether the ones made of the same stuff can go together. Children notice and gently feel two or three objects as a class, then each holds one and places it in a wood, plastic or metal hoop marked with a sample object. They sort matching pictures on the board interactive, draw one thing per material group in the Investigation Journal, and close with a carpet talk on what looking and feeling told them.

Learning objectives

- Sort everyday objects into wood, plastic and metal groups
- Say why an object belongs in its material group

Before the bell – prep

Day before: gather one safe classroom object per child (blocks, spoons, pencils, cups, bricks, taped food tin) plus three sample markers—wooden block, plastic cup, metal spoon. Three empty sorting hoops on the carpet. Check no sharp edges or mouth-sized parts. Investigation Journal page ready.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
varied objects, one per pupil plus three sample markers (chunky wood, plastic and metal items, e.g. wooden block, wooden spoon, pencil, plastic cup, plastic brick, plastic plate, metal spoon, small baking tin, metal ladle)	1	pupil	classroom	ask families to send one clean safe object made of wood, plastic or metal
sorting hoops	3	class	school kit	three large paper circles or PE spots on the floor
Investigation Journal pages	1	pupil	provided printable	plain paper folded or divided into three drawing spaces labelled with a wood, plastic and metal sample sketch the children already know from the hoops

**Safety watch-point**

Every object must be too big to fit fully in a small mouth, with no sharp edges; tape food-tin rims. Dry look-and-feel only. Count objects back; wash hands if needed.

**Teaching moves**

- **Getting Started:** Hold the physical tray so every child can see the mix. Ask only the curiosity question, take a few guesses in their own words, and leave the three hoop names for later. Keep objects on the tray and hoops empty so hands stay free while you talk.
- **Look and wonder:** Choose two or three objects only; hold each up or pass one at a time. Ask what it feels like, what colour it is, and what they think it is made of. Accept everyday words; revoice gently with wood, plastic or metal when it fits. If a child sorts by colour or size, smile and say you will check by looking and feeling what it is made of.
- **Sort the tray:** Hand every child an object first so waiters keep looking and feeling. Model one full cycle with the stem: I think it is wood because... I put it in the wood hoop because.... Call five or six at a time to place and say why in about fifteen seconds; pause mid-way for a whole-class check. Keep it dry look-and-feel only—no magnets, water or glue.
- **Sort the pictures:** Drive the board interactive after the real tray. Read What is it made of? aloud and drag (or invite one child). After every card ask the watchers: Do you agree? What did the real one feel like on the tray? A wrong hoop is a conversation, not a score—link back to how wood, plastic and metal felt.
- **Show and draw:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page with one line only: draw one thing for each material group. Circulate and ask each child to point and say It is wood because.... If someone has sorted by colour, invite them to re-check one real tray object, then draw that.
- **Make-sense talk:** Carpet talk with one focus: why objects went in each hoop. Offer stems I put it with wood because... and The metal ones felt.... Draw out looking, feeling, and the three material groups. Optional teacher-only line: recycling crews sort by material too—do not turn it into a quiz.

**What it should show**

Most infants place blocks, spoons, pencils and rulers in wood; cups, bricks and plates in plastic; spoons, ladle, jug and tin in metal, using look and feel. A common surprise is sorting by colour, size or shininess, or calling a metal spoon silver—re-check against the sample marker and ask what it is made of. A pencil with a metal band counts as wood for this sort.





Misconceptions & interventions

- **Children put things together by colour, size or shininess instead of what they are made of.**
— Point to the sample marker beside the hoop and ask them to look and feel again: Does it match the wood one or just the same colour? Re-place together using the material stem.
- **A shiny metal spoon is a silver group, not metal.** — Hold the spoon next to the metal sample marker. Agree it looks silver-coloured, then feel both: cold and hard like the metal marker, so it belongs in metal.
- **A wooden pencil with a metal band confuses children about which hoop.** — Praise noticing the band, then ask which stuff there is most of. Agree the main material is wood and place it in the wood hoop.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair with a second adult or older buddy at one hoop; let the child match their object to the sample marker by feel before naming the group. • Accept a simple mark in one Journal box plus a spoken reason instead of three drawings.	• After placing, prompt the stem I put it here because... so they practise saying the material reason. • Invite them to help check one classmate’s object against the sample marker.	• Make them the hoop checker who asks why does it belong? after each placement. • Ask them to spot one tray object that has more than one material and say which is the main one.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to early Maths sorting and classifying—same and different groups using real objects on the carpet.