

materials

Hard and soft

Lesson at a glance

Open with a teddy and a metal spoon passed around the circle so a few children feel them while the rest predict squashy or firm. Name hard and soft with a live sponge-and-block press model, then groups explore a touch tray (stone, sponge, wooden block, cotton wool, spoon, soft teddy). Pairs say what they noticed, sort into hard and soft trays, and draw one of each on the Investigation Journal page. Close with a short carpet talk on the press test and why a toy-maker chooses soft materials.

Learning objectives

- Feel objects and sort them into hard or soft
- Say how a hard object and a soft object feel different

Before the bell – prep

Set one touch tray per small group before the bell: smooth stone, clean sponge, wooden block, cotton wool (or soft foam), metal spoon, small soft teddy. Add two empty sorting trays or hoops per group, labelled with a block and teddy picture cue if helpful. Wipe shared sponges between groups.

**Materials**

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
smooth stone or pebble	1	group	outdoors	a large wooden bead or a clean ceramic tile offcut
clean sponge	1	group	supermarket	a clean foam hair roller or a soft foam ball
wooden block	1	group	classroom	a small hardback book or a wooden peg
cotton wool ball	1	group	supermarket	a soft foam piece or a clean soft scarf scrap
metal spoon	1	group	classroom	a metal key ring (no sharp keys) or a blunt metal lid
small soft teddy or soft toy	1	group	classroom	a soft glove or a small cushion
sorting trays or hoops (hard and soft)	2	group	classroom	two sheets of paper labelled with a block picture and a teddy picture
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	a plain page folded in half and labelled hard / soft
crayons	1	pupil	classroom	coloured pencils

Safety watch-point

Fingers only, nothing near mouths; keep the stone on the table (no throwing); wipe shared sponges between groups.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Hold up the teddy and spoon; pass them to a few children only. Fold watchers in with thumbs-up: who thinks the teddy will feel squashy, who thinks the spoon will feel firm? Take two or three notices. Do not name hard and soft yet, and do not set out the full trays.
- **Hard and soft:** Project only the short board text. Run the modelled cycle live: wonder, think, press the sponge so the class sees it squash, then press the wooden block so it stays firm. Name hard and soft from what happened under your fingers, not from size.
- **Touch table:** All groups explore their own trays with fingers only. Model press–notice–say once more, then circulate for prompts and safety. Watch that children press or squeeze rather than only look, and try more than one object.
- **How does it feel?:** Keep it short at the trays or carpet: pick one thing, press it, tell a friend. Take three whole-class shares and revoice with hard and soft. Celebrate pointing and showing. Do not sit long or write — move straight into the sort while the feeling is fresh.
- **Sort hard and soft:** Children bring one object at a time into the hard or soft tray. If the class disagrees, press together and decide as a group. When most are sorted, ask which tray would help a toy-maker choosing materials for a cuddly toy.
- **Show and draw:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page and hold one up so children see the hard side and soft side. Infants draw one hard and one soft object from the class sort. Name the object as they draw; a single-word scribe label is optional if asked.
- **Make-sense talk:** Carpet talk with two questions only: which things felt hard and soft, and how could you tell (the press test); then why a toy-maker might choose soft materials for a cuddly toy. Revoice answers with firm and squashy.

What it should show

Typical sort: hard — stone, wooden block, metal spoon; soft — sponge, cotton wool, teddy. Most will notice squash-in versus stays-firm when they press. Affirm pointing and short phrases; if someone sorts by size or shininess, press again side by side and decide together.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **It's soft because it's small / hard because it's big.** — Press a tiny pebble and a big soft teddy side by side. Ask what happened under their fingers — size is not the rule; the press test is.
- **The spoon is soft because it is shiny or smooth.** — Bring them back to the press test: press the spoon, then the sponge. Revoice: shiny is not the same as squashy; the spoon stayed firm, so it is hard.

**Differentiation**

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Offer hand-over-hand pressing and let the child point to hard or soft rather than name it. • Start with just the teddy and the wooden block so the squash-versus-firm contrast is clear.	• Prompt: Is there anything else on our tray that feels like the teddy? • If unsure about cotton wool, compare it side by side with the sponge and ask which goes in when you press.	• Ask them to tell a partner why the teddy went in soft, using the press test in their own words. • Fast finishers draw a second soft thing a toy-maker might use (cushion, blanket) on the same journal page if space allows.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to oral language: children rehearse feel-words (firm, squashy, hard, soft) in pair talk and whole-class revoicing.