

materials

Squashing and bending: things change!

Lesson at a glance

Hold up one smooth play-dough ball and ask what a big push might do. Model one firm palm-press so the class sees round become flat, then name today's word: change. Each child explores their own set of dough, foil, paper and a bendy stick at the table, squashing, rolling and bending. On the carpet, four or five hold up one changed piece and say what their hands did; close by linking the idea to someone who pushes soft clay into a bowl.

Learning objectives

- Change the shape of play-dough or soft material by squashing, rolling or bending
- Say that pushing can change how a material looks

Before the bell – prep

Night before, portion one small play-dough ball, one foil scrap, one paper scrap and one or two pipe cleaners per child at each place. Optional shallow trays keep sets tidy. Seal leftover dough so it stays soft. Have a scrap tray ready for foil and paper at tidy time.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
play-dough (ready-made tub)	1	pupil	supermarket	home-made salt dough (flour, salt and water mixed the day before)
aluminium foil pieces (about A5 size)	1	pupil	supermarket	clean foil from a used food tray, washed and dried
scrap paper sheets	1	pupil	classroom	used drawing paper or newspaper squares
pipe cleaners	2	pupil	classroom	strips of soft card or thick wool lengths for bending
shallow trays to hold each child's materials at the table	1	pupil	classroom	lids of cardboard boxes, clean baking trays, or materials set directly on the table

**Safety watch-point**

Materials stay out of mouths. Pipe-cleaner ends point away from faces. Wipe dough crumbs; children wash hands after play.

**Teaching moves**

- **Getting Started:** Hold one smooth dough ball high so every child can see it. Do not flatten it yet. Ask 'What might happen if I give it a big push?' and take two or three guesses only — keep the tone playful.
- **Look and wonder:** Model one full cycle aloud: I wonder, I think it will go flat, press once with your palm, I noticed it is not a ball any more, pushing changed how it looks. Head off 'it's broken' by naming that it is still the same dough.
- **Squash, roll and bend:** Children stay seated with their own set. Launch from the board line, then circulate. Call two or three short freezes: invite a child to hold up what changed and name squash, roll, bend or flatten, then resume play. No tray rotation.
- **What changed?:** Gather on the carpet with trays left at tables. Invite four or five children to hold one piece and say one short sentence. Revoice with change: 'You pushed it, and the shape changed.' After each share, run a quick thumbs-up or whisper-the-word choral response.
- **Make-sense talk:** Revoice in child words: when we push, squash or bend soft things, the shape can change — the dough is still there. Describe someone who pushes soft clay into a bowl we can use; hold a small bowl or photo only if you have one. Ask who made something flat or bent something.

**What it should show**

Most children will show a flat pancake or rolled sausage of play-dough; foil often stays scrunched; paper keeps creases; pipe cleaners become curves, zigzags or rings. Affirm that different soft things change in different ways. If a child says the dough is 'gone', hold the pancake and leftover crumbs and name it the same dough in a new shape.

**Misconceptions & interventions**

- **Some children think the play-dough has gone or been broken when it is no longer a ball.** — Hold the flattened piece and any crumbs together and say: it is still the same play-dough — only the shape changed.
- **A child may think only play-dough can change and ignore foil, paper or the bendy stick.** — During a freeze-and-show, point to a scrunched foil ball or creased paper and ask: did this look like that before you pushed it?





Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Offer just the play-dough and one action word — squash — and sit with them for the first press. • Accept a point or gesture instead of a full sentence when they share on the carpet.	• Prompt a second material after the first change: try the foil or the bendy stick next. • Ask 'what did your hands do?' so they name squash, roll or bend.	• Challenge them to make a little bowl or snake and say what they pushed to get that shape. • Invite them to compare two materials: which kept the new shape more?

Cross-curricular hook

Links to Visual Arts — construction and clay work — naming how hands push soft materials into new shapes.