

Toys that need winding, batteries or a push

Lesson at a glance

Surprise the class with a wind-up toy set moving on its own and invite guesses. Uncover four toys on a tray (wind-up, sealed torch, push car, spinning top) and model wonder-try-notice on the wind-up. Every child presses a sealed torch switch on the carpet, then rotates through push, spin and wind floor spots, labelling wind, switch or push. Circle share and make-sense talk revoice the three actions and lightly name energy.

Learning objectives

- Try different toys and say whether each needs a wind, a switch, or a push
- Talk about how different toys get going (and that this is energy)

Before the bell – prep

Day before: gather two sealed screwed-shut torches (no button/coin cells), two wind-up toys, six push cars or soft balls, four chunky tops. Mark three clear floor spots (push lane, spin patch, wind spot). Keep spare batteries out of reach and torches with you.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
wind-up toy (chunky, easy key or knob)	2	class	school kit	a wind-up kitchen timer used as a 'toy that goes when wound'
battery torch with sealed, screwed-shut battery compartment	2	class	school kit	a classroom torch or large flashlight with a screwed cover (never a loose button-cell light)
simple toy cars that roll when pushed (not pull-back)	6	class	school kit	small soft balls to roll with a gentle push — any school has plenty, and they work just as well for this
spinning tops (chunky, no mouth-sized parts)	4	class	school kit	a large plastic lid or chunky PE marker disc spun on the floor under adult watch — nothing small enough to fit in a mouth; if none available, skip the top and use only the push car for push toys
shallow trays or floor spots to mark the three play spots	3	class	classroom	shallow cardboard box lids, or PE floor markers

**Safety watch-point**

Only toys with sealed, screwed-shut battery covers; no button or coin cells. If a cover can pop open, remove it at once. Push and spin away from faces and toes; nothing near mouths.

**Teaching moves**

- **Getting Started:** Wind one toy under the table, set it moving alone, and let the class gasp. Ask 'How did it move without me pushing it just then?' Accept every guess with a smile; hold back the words wind, switch and push until hands have tried.
- **What makes a toy go?:** Uncover the four toys on a tray and hold each up briefly. Model the full cycle on the wind-up only: wonder, guess, wind the key, set it down, notice it walks, say 'this toy needs a wind.' Do not list vocabulary on the board yet.
- **Toy station play:** Minutes 0–4: pass both sealed torches along two short lines so every child switches on and off once—covers stay shut; say 'the switch lets it go; a battery inside gives it the go.' Minutes 4–12: send thirds to push, spin and wind spots; stand at the wind spot and help stiff keys; swap groups at minute 8. After each try ask 'Wind, switch, or push?' Regroup with a clap or song at minute 12.
- **What did we notice?:** Hold up each toy and invite two or three children to mime wind, switch or push and say what happened. Revoice: winding gave energy; the battery stores energy and we only touch the switch; our push or spin gave energy. Keep pace quick so four- and five-year-olds stay watching.
- **Make-sense talk:** Line the four toys up and touch each as you revoice the action the children already showed. Light link only: 'That is how each toy gets the energy to go.' Hold two at a time and ask children to point and say wind, switch or push.
- **Tidy time:** Children return toys to the tray. Check torch covers are still screwed shut and store battery toys securely. Exit check: point to one toy and ask a nearby child 'Wind, switch, or push?' Smile and revoice if needed.

**What it should show**

Most Junior Infants will link each toy to wind, switch or push by word or gesture, and notice it walked, lit, rolled or spun. Expect the torch to be the one some call 'magic' or say needs no action—steer back to the switch they pressed. Affirm spin as a kind of push.

**Misconceptions & interventions**

- **'The torch is magic' or 'it just lights by itself.'** — Hold the sealed torch and have the child press the switch on and off again. Revoice: 'We switched it. A battery inside stores the energy—we only touch the switch.'
- **'Every toy needs batteries to go.'** — Hold the wind-up and a push car beside the torch. Point back to what hands did: 'We wound this one. We pushed these. Only the torch uses a battery inside.'





Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
Let the child point or mime wind / switch / push while you name the word beside them at the spot.	After a try, ask ‘What did you do? What happened?’ and wait for both the action word and one noticing.	Ask which toy was most surprising and why, still using only wind, switch or push.

Cross-curricular hook

Pairs with Aistear play and oral language—children rehearse the three action words through gesture and talk.