

Pushes and pulls

Lesson at a glance

Open with one soft ball and ask how we could move it without kicking — accept any idea, no labels yet. Name push and pull live: roll the ball away, pull a pull-along toy closer, then demo the classroom door open (pull) and closed (push). Pupils rotate three short floor stations — pull toy, squash dough, roll-and-stop ball — saying push or pull out loud. Close on the carpet with body mimes and a partner share of one push or pull they used.

Learning objectives

- Do a push and a pull and say which one they used
- Notice that a push or a pull can make something move, stop, or change shape

Before the bell – prep

Before the bell, set three floor stations only: pull-along toy on a short taped lane, one pot of play-dough, and a soft ball on a floor lane. Keep the door free for the Step 2 whole-class demo, then leave it closed. A string box works if pull-toys are short.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
play-dough (small lump)	1	pupil	classroom	soft modelling clay or a scrap of soft bread dough
pull-along toy or small wagon	1	class	classroom	a small cardboard box with a string tied through two holes
soft ball	1	class	classroom	a pair of rolled-up socks
masking tape (for a short floor lane)	1	class	classroom	two skipping ropes laid parallel as lane edges

Safety watch-point

Push and pull gently, away from faces, toes and friends. Balls roll on the floor only. Classroom door stays closed during the circuit after the short demo.



Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Hold up one soft ball only. Ask the single question: how could we make it move without kicking? Accept blow, roll or tip with a smile. Do not name push or pull yet and keep the pull-along toy out of sight.
- **Push or pull?:** Model once live: push the ball with a flat hand so it rolls away, then pull the toy toward you by its string. Name the direction each time. At the classroom door, invite one child to open toward themselves (pull) and one to press closed away (push); adult stays at the door, then the door station is finished — do not leave it as a free rotation.
- **Push-and-pull play circuit:** Split into three groups, one per station. Clap to rotate every three to four minutes so each group visits pull toy, squash dough and roll ball. Circulate asking 'Was that a push or a pull? What did the thing do?' Watch hands and feet stay clear of others; join a group briefly only if they need a model.
- **What did we notice?:** On the carpet, invite four or five children to mime one job. Class choruses push or pull. Revoice in a full sentence: 'You pulled the toy and it moved toward you' or 'You pushed the dough and it changed shape.' Shy children may point while you name it — no Investigation Journal page.
- **Who uses pushes and pulls?:** Each child tells a partner one push or one pull from today's stations. Then you model a quick everyday link (buggy, school bag, box) and invite one or two spoken ideas if time allows. If talk stalls, prompt: can a push stop something as well as start it?

What it should show

Most Junior Infants will name rolling and stopping the ball as pushes, drawing the toy as a pull, and squashing dough as a push that changes shape. Affirm move, stop and change-of-shape language. If a child calls every touch a push, redirect with direction: away from me is a push; toward me is a pull.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Any touch is a push — children do not yet use direction to decide.** — Hold the ball or toy and name it live: 'Away from me is a push; toward me is a pull.' Repeat the door open/close chorus once more.
- **The ball moved by itself — hands are forgotten once it rolls.** — Gently return to the hands: 'Your push made it go.' Have the child push once more from a still start and say push as it leaves.
- **Stopping or squashing does not count as a push — only starting a roll does.** — At the ball station, place a gentle hand against a rolling ball and name it a push that stops. At the dough, press flat and name the shape change as a push too.



Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Let the child point to a push or pull picture card you hold up while you name the word and the direction. • Pair them at one station and model the action once together before they try.	• Ask after each try: was that a push or a pull, and what did the thing do — move, stop, or change shape?	• At the ball station, try a little push and a bigger push and say which went further. • Mime a station job for the class and lead the chorus of push or pull.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to oral language: children rehearse full sentences naming an action and what happened to the object.