

Float or sink?

Lesson at a glance

Hold up a toy boat and a stone and take a playful hands-up guess before any water appears. Teach float and sink with big hand gestures, then drive the float-or-sink interactive so the class predicts cork, spoon, stone, sponge and boat. At the water tray each child places one object gently and watches. Compare real results to the board guesses, sort a dry set into float and sink hoops, then mark the Investigation Journal pictures.

Learning objectives

- Guess then watch whether everyday objects float or sink in water
- Sort objects into float and sink groups

Before the bell – prep

Fill shallow trays before the bell (one per group of 4–6 if adults allow). Set out two matching sets of cork, metal spoon, stone, clean sponge and small toy boat — wet play and dry sorting stay separate. Towels under every tray; float/sink picture label cards and two hoops ready on the floor.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
shallow water tray or large washing-up bowl	1	group	classroom	a clean cat-litter tray or deep roasting tin used only for water play
cork	2	group	supermarket	a bottle cork or a small piece of polystyrene packing
metal spoon	2	group	classroom	a metal key or clean metal bottle lid
smooth stone	2	group	outdoors	a clean glass marble or a metal washer
clean sponge	2	group	supermarket	a piece of clean foam packing or a dry face cloth scrunched into a pad
small toy boat	2	group	classroom	a foil boat folded by the teacher before the lesson, or a plastic bottle lid
towels	2	group	classroom	old tea towels or a roll of kitchen paper
sorting hoops (or two shallow trays)	2	class	school kit	two empty trays or two clear floor spaces, marked the same way with the boat and the stone
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	a blank page folded in half with a float side and a sink side

Safety watch-point

Adult at every water station. No tasting water; wipe spills at once and mind slippery floors. Children wash hands and dry sleeves at tidy-up.

Teaching moves

- **Float and sink:** Model the words with whole-body gestures: flat hand on the surface for float, diving hand for sink. Keep the board tiny — bodies carry the meaning. Flag gently that size alone is not the rule; we watch each thing.
- **Guess on the board:** Drive the float-or-sink interactive in explore mode. Hold up each real object, take a class call of float or sink, then tap the guess. Leave Drop locked until every object has a prediction; leave all guesses visible for later.
- **Water tray play:** Model the full spoken cycle once with the cork only, then send groups to trays. One object per child, placed gently; revoice float or sink. If only one adult, rotate groups for about two minutes while waiters hold a dry object and whisper a guess.
- **Watch what the water did:** Back at the IWB, reveal or drop each on-screen object beside the class guess. Hold up the real wet objects as you ask which stayed up, which went down, and which surprised us. Oral only — no writing.
- **Sort into two hoops:** Use the dry set only. Children take turns placing one object in the float or sink hoop and saying the word. If a placement is mixed up, invite a re-check at the water rather than correcting for them.
- **Show and draw:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page. Circulate and ask each child to point to one floater and one sinker; accept pointing plus one spoken word. Fast finishers draw one classroom object they would like to try next time — oral share only.

What it should show

Cork, dry sponge and toy boat float; metal spoon and stone sink. A sponge may soak and sit lower — still talk about it staying mostly up at first. If a boat tips, reshape gently: boats need a good shape to stay up. A group that calls the sponge a sinker usually left it too long; try a fresh dry one.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Big things always sink and small things always float.** — Hold the big sponge beside the small stone after both have been in water. Revoice: size is not the rule by itself — we watch what each thing does.
- **A sponge that sits lower after soaking has sunk.** — Point to how much is still above the water. Cheer that it stayed mostly up at first, and keep the word float for this try.

**Differentiation**

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Stay at the teacher tray and place one object with hand-over-hand support; accept pointing to the float or sink hoop instead of saying the word. • On the Investigation Journal page, sort just two picture cards first (one clear floater, one clear sinker).	• After their turn, whisper a guess for the next child's object before it goes in. • When sorting hoops, say float or sink and point to the matching picture label.	• Name one surprise from the tray and say whether the board guess matched. • Suggest one classroom object to try next time and say float or sink with a reason in one short phrase.

Cross-curricular hook

Light link to Irish island ferries: boat builders shape boats so they stay up on the water.