

materials

Changing materials: squash, bend, tear, stretch

Lesson at a glance

Hold up one soft ball of play-dough and ask if hands alone can change how it looks. Model squash, then lead quick mimes of bend, tear and stretch. Infants try each change at their own tray with play-dough, short pipe cleaners, paper strips and an elastic band. Partner talk names the change and what stayed the same or became different. Close by matching a clay pot and a folded card to the actions that made them.

Learning objectives

- Change a material by squashing, bending, tearing or stretching
- Name the change they made to a material
- Notice one thing that stayed the same and one thing that is different

Before the bell – prep

Portion play-dough into small balls the day before. Cut soft pipe cleaners or craft wire to about 15 cm with ends tucked. Set scrap paper strips and one wide elastic band on each tray or mat. Gather a small clay pot and a folded card (or simple photos) for the close.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
play-dough (small ball)	1	pupil	classroom	soft modelling clay or homemade salt dough
soft craft wire or pipe cleaners (short lengths, about 15 cm)	1	pupil	classroom	pipe cleaners only, or thin twist-ties with ends covered in tape
scrap paper strips	3	pupil	classroom	old newspaper or used drawing paper
wide elastic band	1	pupil	classroom	hair bobble or short strip of stretchy fabric
tray or work mat for materials	1	group	classroom	large sheet of newspaper as a work mat
small clay pot or mug (or a simple photo of a pot)	1	class	classroom	any ceramic cup or plant pot already in school
folded birthday card or paper booklet	1	class	classroom	any folded paper card or reading book already in the room

**Safety watch-point**

Stretch and bend away from faces and eyes; no flicking elastic bands; soft wire only with ends tucked; no tasting play-dough; wash hands after.

**Teaching moves**

- **Four ways to change:** Press the play-dough flat slowly with both palms so the class sees one full squash. Ask only what looks different and whether it is still the same kind of dough. Then add bend, tear and stretch one at a time as mimes the children copy — no extra materials and no long board definitions.
- **Changing trays:** Model one full cycle with play-dough first: I wonder, I think, I squash, I notice same and different. Send children to stay at their own tray — do not run four room rotations in this Infants slot. Circulate with short prompts only after hands are busy: squash the dough, bend the wire into a hoop, tear the paper gently, stretch the band slowly and let go.
- **What stayed the same?:** Each child chooses one changed object only; trays stay put and bands stay unstretched. Talk partners name the change first, then what stayed the same, then what is different — one stem at a time with the object still in hand. Revoice three or four pairs into clear same/different sentences; if talk stays vague, point and ask Is it still paper? How many pieces now?
- **Who changes materials?:** Hold up the pot, then the card, with one simple line each before any job name. Ask the board choice: which change did the pot need — accept squash and/or bend. Keep the close oral and short; do not stack job labels and open questions on the board together.

**What it should show**

Most Infants will squash dough flat, bend wire into a curve or hoop, tear paper into two, and stretch then release the band. They typically name the action and notice shape, size or number of pieces changed while the stuff is still dough, paper or wire. Draw out the band surprise: some changes stay, and some spring back when they let go.

**Misconceptions & interventions**

- **After a change, children say the material has become a different material (It is not play-dough any more).** — Point to the object and revoice gently: it is still play-dough — only the shape changed. Torn paper is still paper, now in two pieces.
- **Children think every change must stay forever, so the elastic band going back confuses them.** — Hold the stretched band, let go together, and name it: some changes stay, and some spring back when we let go.



Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
You say the action word while the child does the move; stay with mime support rather than asking them to find the word alone.	After one change, prompt the partner stems one at a time: name the change, then same, then different.	Try putting a changed material back (roll the dough, unbend the wire) and say which change is easy or hard to undo.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to oral language: partner stems I squashed... / It is still... / Now it is... with the object in hand.