

Pushes and pulls move things

Lesson at a glance

Open with one pull toy on the carpet: give it a gentle pull, then a gentle push, and ask how it started moving — do not name the words yet. Next, model push and pull once with a soft ball and the string toy. Groups of three to four then play on the floor with one soft ball and one pull toy each, saying push or pull after every try. Carpet share three or four actions with a class chorus, then partner-talk one everyday push and one pull before a quick tidy and oral exit check.

Learning objectives

- Use a push or a pull to start, stop or change how something moves
- Name whether they used a push or a pull
- With support, say one thing that changed (start, stop, faster or turn)

Before the bell – prep

Clear safe floor space for four to six groups of three to four. One soft ball and one pull toy per group (a small box or bag with a short string is fine). Keep the floor kit hidden until play; have only the demo pull toy beside you at the start.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
soft ball	1	group	classroom	a pair of rolled-up socks
pull toy (small box or bag with a short string, or a pull-along animal on wheels)	1	group	classroom	a small cardboard box with a string taped on as a pull handle
clear floor space for safe rolling	1	class	classroom	a short corridor space with an adult at each end
picture of a builder pushing a wheelbarrow (IWB image or simple printed photo)	1	class	classroom	teacher mimes pushing a wheelbarrow if no picture is available

Safety watch-point

Push and pull gently; keep space between groups; roll balls away from feet and faces; no throwing; keep strings away from necks.



Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Hold only the pull toy. Give one gentle pull so it rolls toward you, then one gentle push so it rolls away. Ask how the toy started moving; accept any ideas. Keep it short and curious — naming comes next.
- **Push or pull?:** Show the two key points on the board. Hold the soft ball and ask which will start it rolling. Then model once only: push the ball away and say ‘that is a push’; pull the string toy toward you and say ‘that is a pull’. Do not list start, stop, faster and turn on the board.
- **Push and pull play:** Give every group a soft ball and a pull toy so all children are active together. Core job: after each try, name push or pull. Coach mobile: ‘Was that a push or a pull?’ For ready children only, add oral stretch ‘What changed — start, stop, faster, or turn?’ Aim for every child to complete at least one push and one pull in about 12 minutes.
- **What did we notice?:** Invite three or four children to show or mime one floor action. Class choruses push or pull. Stretch only if ready: what changed. If someone mixes them up, re-model once with the ball — hands away = push; hands bring it toward or along = pull.
- **Who uses pushes and pulls?:** Show the builder pushing a wheelbarrow and name it a push; mime pulling a trolley and name it a pull. Anchor to today’s ball and string toy, then partner talk: one push and one pull from play or a shared example (buggy, bag on wheels). Keep it oral — no drawing or writing.
- **Tidy and remember:** Count balls and pull toys back into the box together. Exit check with two children: ‘Show me a push. Show me a pull.’ Class thumbs-up. Optional oral home notice only: spot one push and one pull tonight.

What it should show

Most children will correctly name a push on the ball (moves away) and a pull on the string toy (comes toward or along). The must-have is push vs pull, not the change words. Ready children may also say start, stop, faster or turn. A child who calls every move a push needs the hands-away vs hands-toward re-model with the ball.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Any movement is a push — children say ‘push’ for the string toy coming toward them too.** — Ask: ‘Did your hands push it away, or pull it toward you or along with you?’ Re-model once with the ball (away) and the string toy (toward).
- **Children think the only way to move the toy is to pick it up.** — Point back to the opening demo: ‘We did not lift it — watch the push make it roll away and the pull bring it with me.’ Have them try one floor push and one floor pull themselves.



Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Stay at the teacher table and practise only naming push or pull on one soft toy with the ball and one pull on the string toy. • Partner with a confident peer who models the word first; the child echoes after each turn.	• After naming push or pull, add one oral stretch: ‘What changed — did it start, stop, go faster, or turn?’ • Try a soft side push on the ball and say whether it turned.	• Compare a bigger push and a smaller push on the ball and say which went further. • In the carpet share, give a reason when agreeing or gently correcting a peer’s push/pull label.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to PE locomotor language and Aistear play — children rehearse push/pull vocabulary they use with buggies, doors and yard toys.