

Magnets at work

Lesson at a glance

Open by holding up a steel tray with a picture stuck on by a fridge magnet and ask what is keeping it up. Name the big idea — magnet job — then model thinking aloud that this magnet is holding. Groups rotate through two stations: holding pictures on a tray with chunky fridge magnets, and catching paperclips with magnet wands. On the carpet, children name the job they tried, then open and shut a magnetic catch box to meet the third job — closing — and talk about magnets that help at home.

Learning objectives

- Explore at least two everyday magnet jobs hands-on
- Name the job a magnet is doing in a simple example
- Talk about how magnets help us in daily life

Before the bell — prep

Night before, test that chunky fridge magnets actually hold on your steel baking tray (or filing-cabinet side / magnetic whiteboard strip). Set Station A tray with pictures and magnets; Station B shallow tray of paperclips/washers and two magnet wands only. Tape a floor line at Station B. Have the magnetic catch box ready for the carpet demo. Count magnets into a class tub.

**Materials**

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
chunky fridge magnets	6	class	classroom	large craft magnets from a euro shop (still chunky, never button magnets)
steel (magnetic) baking tray — test with a fridge magnet before the lesson	1	class	classroom	the side of a metal filing cabinet or a magnetic whiteboard strip
small paper pictures or name cards	8	class	classroom	scrap paper squares the children decorate
small box or tin with a magnetic catch	1	class	hardware shop	a pencil tin or glasses case that already has a magnetic snap
chunky magnet wands	4	class	school kit	chunky bar magnets held in adult-supervised hands
paperclips and small metal washers	20	class	classroom	metal bottle caps cleaned and dried
shallow tray for the fishing station	1	class	classroom	a clean shoe-box lid
magnetic letter board with chunky magnetic letters (optional — second-adult side station only)	1	class	classroom	a steel baking tray with chunky fridge-magnet letters

Safety watch-point

Chunky magnets only; keep magnets and small metal pieces away from mouths. Teacher stays at the fishing tray the whole time. Count every magnet and wand back in before tidy.



Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Before children sit, stick a picture to the steel tray with a chunky fridge magnet and hold it up so the whole class can see. Ask ‘What is keeping the picture up?’ Take two or three guesses without naming the magnet yet if they have not said it.
- **What jobs can magnets do?:** Point to the fridge magnet still holding the picture. Say magnet job clearly and have the class repeat once. Think aloud the worked model: wonder what job it is doing, try it, notice the pull toward the metal, conclude holding. Give only a light spoken preview of holding and catching at stations — do not list job words on the board yet.
- **Magnet job stations:** Four groups of 5–7; everyone visits both stations in about 12 minutes. Station A (adult-free): horseshoe around the tray, only two children holding magnets at a time, magnet minder counts them back flat between turns. Station B: you stay here — only two wands in use, rest behind the taped line. At each station ask ‘What is the magnet doing? How is that helping?’ and revoice holding or catching.
- **What job did you notice?:** Carpet talk with the fridge magnet and wand as prompts. Think-pair-share first, then four or five voices. Offer the starter ‘My magnet was... and its job was...’. If a child only says it stuck, revoice: the magnet was pulling, and its job was holding.
- **Magnets help us:** Priority is the catch-box demo: let two or three children open and shut it so the class hears the click, then name closing / keeping shut. Only if time remains, open everyday talk about bags, doors and toys from that solid example.
- **Tidy and finish:** Count every chunky magnet, wand and letter back into the tub before anyone lines up; check floors for paperclips and washers. One-line recap: magnets at work — holding, closing and catching.

What it should show

Most Senior Infants will name holding at the tray and catching at the fishing tray, and after the carpet demo will accept closing for the catch box. Some will only say ‘it stuck’ — affirm the pull, then revoice the job word. Affirm any child who links the job to help (picture stays up; metal is picked up).

Misconceptions & interventions

- **‘The magnet is sticky like glue.’** — Name the difference gently on the real fridge magnet: glue sticks and stays messy; a magnet pulls and you can lift it off clean. Let them stick and unstick the picture once to feel the clean lift.
- **‘Every metal thing is a magnet.’** — At the catch box or tray, remind them: a magnet does the pulling; many metal things only get pulled. Point to the paperclip — it is not a magnet, the wand is.

**Differentiation**

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Offer the two station job words orally while pointing at the real object: 'Is it holding or catching?' Pair with a partner who models try-and-say.	• If a pair finishes early at Station A, ask them to name one thing on the table the magnet will not pull — still only two magnets in hands.	• Prompt the help link: 'How is that magnet helping?' Invite them to spot the closing job on the catch box and suggest one more place a magnet might help.

Cross-curricular hook

Oral language: sentence starter 'My magnet was... and its job was...' supports recount and topic vocabulary in English.