

Pushes and pulls

Lesson at a glance

Open with one soft ball on the floor and ask how hands could move it without feet. Model push and pull at the classroom door, then with the ball, play-dough and wagon, adding the word force only after both actions are clear. Mixed groups rotate a short push-and-pull play circuit (Door, Wagon, Play-dough, Ball), naming the action and what happened. Pupils record two stations on the Investigation Journal page, then spot everyday pushes and pulls around the room.

Learning objectives

- Name an action as a push or a pull
- Say what happened when a push or pull was used on an object

Before the bell – prep

Set four labelled stations before the bell: cupboard door (or classroom door as a shared stop), one pull-along wagon, play-dough on a tray, one soft ball on a clear floor lane. Keep spares boxed. Sticky notes: Door, Wagon, Play-dough, Ball.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
soft ball	2	class	school kit	a rolled pair of socks or a tennis ball
play-dough (fist-sized ball on a tray)	4	class	classroom	soft modelling clay or a piece of blu-tack
pull-along toy or small wagon	1	class	school kit	a cardboard box with a string handle
station sticky-note labels (Door, Wagon, Play-dough, Ball)	1	class	classroom	scrap paper labels and sticky tape
tray for play-dough station	1	class	classroom	a plastic lid or a sheet of newspaper
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	a blank A4 page with two boxes for the two stations
pencil	1	pupil	classroom	crayon or colouring pencil



Safety watch-point

Gentle actions only. One soft ball rolled on the floor away from feet—no throwing. Keep the wagon path clear; supervise door openings.



Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Place one soft ball in front of the class. Take two or three ideas for moving it without feet. If someone says kick, steer to hands only. Do not name push or pull yet.
- **Push or pull?:** Open the door toward you (pull) and away (push); class call out which is which. Model aloud: push the ball away, press play-dough flat, pull the wagon closer. Only then say the wrap-up line: a push or a pull is called a force. Keep force off the board so children name the action, not guess three labels.
- **Push-and-pull play circuit:** Split into four mixed groups; three to four minutes per station, clap or chime to rotate. Stay mobile asking Push or pull? What happened? One object per station—watchers join the call-out. If a station stalls, model once and hand it back. Prefer a cupboard door so you can circulate.
- **Record what happened:** On the Investigation Journal page, each child chooses two stations. Prompt only: Push or pull? and What happened? Accept a drawing plus the word push or pull; offer stems such as I used a push and the ball rolled away if writing stalls. If a label is swapped, redo the action once at the object.
- **Spot pushes and pulls around us:** Pairs get one minute to spot one push and one pull in the room, then take four or five shares on the board. If ideas dry up, point to a blind, chair or bag and ask what hands would do. Keep it oral—no second recording. Park big-versus-small push talk for later; today only names the kind.

What it should show

Children should name rolling the ball and flattening play-dough as pushes (moves away or changes shape) and tugging the wagon as a pull (comes closer). The door is pull if opened toward them, push if opened away. A swapped label usually means they have not re-felt the action—return to the object and redo it once together.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Only a big hard shove counts as a push — a gentle press does not.** — Press the play-dough flat gently and say it still went flat, so it is still a push. Today we only name the kind; how strong comes later.
- **Children mix push and pull, saying pull when the ball rolls away or push when the wagon comes closer.** — Redo the action with them at the object and re-voice: away from me is push; toward me is pull. Match the word to what their hands just did.



Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Accept a drawing plus the single word push or pull; stay with the child at one station and name the action together before they record. • Pair them so they watch a peer’s turn and join the call-out before trying the object.	• Prompt What happened? so they add the outcome (rolled away, went flat, came closer) beside the push/pull label. • If a group finishes a station early, ask them to spot one more push or pull from where they stand.	• Stretch to a full stem sentence on the journal page for both stations, checking the label matches the action. • In the classroom hunt, ask them to explain why that action is a push or a pull (away vs toward).

Cross-curricular hook

Oral language: pairs use the stems push/pull and what happened when sharing classroom examples with the class.