



I'm a teacher, get
me OUTSIDE here!



Creative STAR
Learning Ltd

Parent Advice Sheet: Understanding Weight

Weight is how heavy an object is. The concept is linked to children's physical development. Children need to lift and move objects which feel heavy. They need to develop a sense of balance and awareness that one thing may feel heavier than another. Physical skills and strength are linked to exploring weight. Children need lots of play and real life experiences of weight to ensure they can:

- Estimate and compare objects by how heavy or light they feel. This is often easier to do when things are placed in bags or buckets and then held.
- Understand that weight can be conserved. Have two tubs of playdoh, one for you and one for your child. By playing with equal lumps of playdoh, your child will learn that no matter how heavy the playdoh feels, this does not change with the different shapes made by each lump or whether it is rolled flat.
- Use different types of weighing scales. The best sort are the old-fashioned kitchen scales with the weights. They help children visually compare the items being weighed. Regardless of the type of scales you have, ensure you discuss with children how they work and encourage children to experiment and explore at their own pace.
- Use different objects as a weighing tool. For example, you can use an egg to measure equal amounts of self-raising flour, sugar and butter to make a simple cake with old-fashioned kitchen scales as shown in this video: <https://youtu.be/lojQe-gfyFQ>



Be aware...

- Young children may be able to read numbers such as 100g on a weighing machine. Talk about the numbers and encourage child to see how these change with difference objects being placed on the machine, but remember that conceptually, this makes no sense to them until they are older.
- Children need plenty of time to repeat experiences using familiar toys and objects that they like to play with.

Fun explorations of body weight

- Talk about how it feel when going up and down on an elevator or when on a ride at a fairground.
- Look for a seesaw in a local playground. These are giant weighing scales! Can you and your child workout where you must each sit so that the seesaw is level?
- Go climbing up the side of a climbing frame or traversing wall in a park or even climb a suitable tree. Children learn to feel their own weight when climbing

- Balancing involves keeping your weight evenly distributed. How many different ways can your child find to safely balance on equipment in your local park?

Talk about weight and the idea of measuring and the need to measure with your child through everyday situations

- Investigate which bath toys are heaviest and lightest. Do these match those which sink and those which float?
- Guess what's inside a box, tin or present? Try and work out what might be inside by how heavy it feels and the sound it makes when gently shaken. Try this with two or three similar boxes.
- Compare how heavy different pairs of shoes feel. For example, does your child's welly boots feel heavier than their trainers?
- Weigh luggage before you go on a flight. You may have spring balance scales or digital luggage scales for this purpose.
- Do the heaviest balls, cars and other moving objects travel the furthest when pushed? Using and playing with the same kind of object, but which weigh different amounts, gives children opportunities to compare just two things, or three or more.
- Let your child play with pots and pans of different sizes and weights.

“Believe it or not” explorations that defy logic

- Compare cushions. If you have an assortment of cushions, some may feel heavier but be smaller than others.
- A balloon that is blown up will feel as heavy as one which is not blown up.
- Buy a piece of pumice rock from a skin care department. It feels so light. Will it float or sink?
- A large sponge – compare how heavy it feels when it is full of water to when it is wrung out.
- Weigh some pine cones before leaving them to soak in water. Then see how much heavier they have become. Use a bucket scale to compare equal numbers of wet and dry cones
- Do larger snowballs always feel heavier than smaller ones? What does your child think? How can you find out?
- Grow and harvest pumpkins and gourds for endless “weighty” conversations.



Stories

Books, songs and rhymes are also useful for talking about aspects of size reinforcing the vocabulary of size and distance. Examples include:

- *Mighty Maddie* by Stuart Murphy
- *Me and the Measure of Things* by Joan Sweeney
- *On the Scale, A Weighty Tale* by Brian Cleary
- *Whimsey's Heavy Things* by Julie Kraulis