Float or Sink: Adult Guide

Support the method and evidence. The experiment has no predetermined object answer list.

Before testing

Stay beside the child throughout. Use a stable bowl with only a shallow layer of water and empty it immediately afterwards. Check that the four objects are large, unbreakable, clean and safe to wet. Avoid sharp items, glass, batteries, electrical items and objects that fit in a mouth. Protect the work surface and wipe spills promptly.

What counts as evidence?

The four first results and both repeated results are variable. Compare the written records with what actually happens. F means the object remains at the water surface after release; part of it may be submerged. S means it goes down and rests on the bottom. O permits another observed result, including a changing or unclear result. Record a description rather than forcing a choice.

Check the records and conclusion

Each first-test row needs one prediction and one observed code. The F, S and O counts should total 4. Each repeat row must identify one original object. Copy its original code into “First result”. The repeat result may differ. Check the “Same?” answer against the two results. Accept a conclusion such as “In our test, the wooden spoon floated” only when supported by the child’s record.

The two fixed vocabulary answers

1. Prediction. 2. Observation. A prediction is not marked wrong because the outcome differs: it is a reasoned idea made before the test. Do not award fixed floating or sinking answers to particular materials. Shape, trapped air and how an object is placed can matter; absorbent objects may change during the test.

Suggested ages 5–8 with close adult support. Scientific background: USGS Water Science School.