

WALT: Explain that unsupported objects
fall towards the Earth due to the force of
gravity



Falling Down

Gravity is the force that means that objects are pulled towards the centre of the Earth.

All objects exert a gravitational pull. However, the strength of an object's gravitational pull depends on its mass. The Earth is a huge object with an extremely high mass, so its gravitational pull is very strong.

The force of gravity keeps us on the ground. Gravity also causes objects to fall down if they are dropped.



Discovering Gravity

Isaac Newton famously developed his theory of gravity when he saw an apple fall to the ground from an apple tree.

Read your Newton and Gravity Fact Sheet about his life and his theory. Then answer the questions on the Newton and Gravity Activity Sheet.

Newton and Gravity Fact Sheet



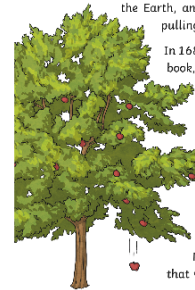
Isaac Newton was an English scientist and mathematician. He made many discoveries in his lifetime. One of the most important and influential discoveries that he made was the law of gravity.

Newton was born in 1643 at Woolthorpe Manor in Lincolnshire. He worked hard at school, and was accepted to study at Cambridge University. He worked there for many years, but in 1666 the plague broke out and he was forced to move back to Woolthorpe Manor.

While Newton was in the garden at Woolthorpe Manor one day, he saw an apple fall from a tree. Some say it fell on his head but there is no evidence that this definitely happened. The sight of the apple falling down from the branch to the ground inspired Newton to think about the way it fell. Years later, he told his friend William Stukeley that he wondered why the apple fell down rather than sideways or upwards. He concluded there must be a 'drawing power' in the Earth and that 'the sum of the drawing power must be in the Earth's centre, not in any side of the Earth.'



Newton spent a lot of time thinking hard about the force of gravity, and how it pulls objects down towards the centre of the Earth. He was particularly interested in the way the Moon orbits the Earth, and he reasoned that gravity must extend over vast distances, pulling the Moon towards the Earth and keeping it in orbit.



In 1687, Newton published his discoveries about gravity in his famous book, *The Principia*. His findings are known today as Newton's Law of Universal Attraction.

Newton died in 1727, but his legacy lives on. All forces are measured in newtons (N), using a newton meter – both of which are named after Isaac Newton. Even Albert Einstein, writing in 1927, 200 years after Newton's death, described Newton as a 'shining spirit', and claimed he had one of the most brilliant minds of anybody who had ever lived.

Today the apple tree that inspired Newton's ideas still grows in the gardens at Woolthorpe Manor, now owned by the National Trust. It can be seen from the window of the room that was Isaac Newton's bedroom.

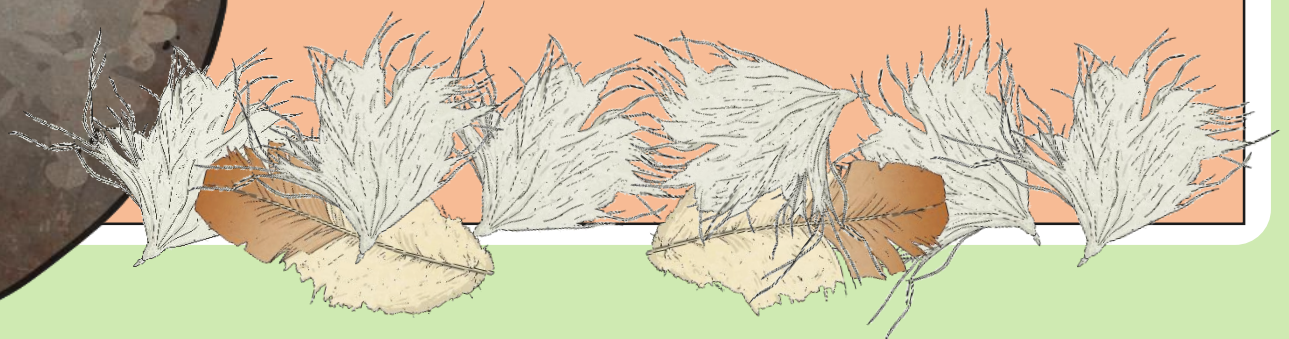
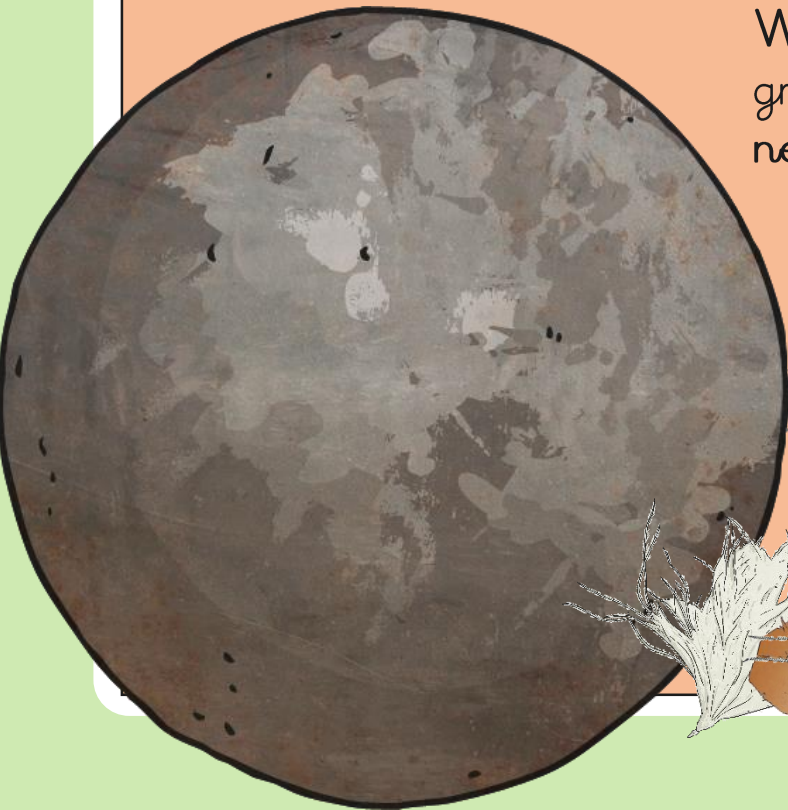
Weight and Mass

People often use the words weight and mass to mean the same thing.

Mass is a measure of the amount of 'stuff' inside an object, and is measured in kilograms (kg).

Weight is actually a measure of the strength of gravity acting on an object. It is measured in newtons (N).

The **weight** of an object is caused by **gravity** pulling it down. Objects with more **mass** have a greater weight, as the force of gravity pulls them down more strongly.



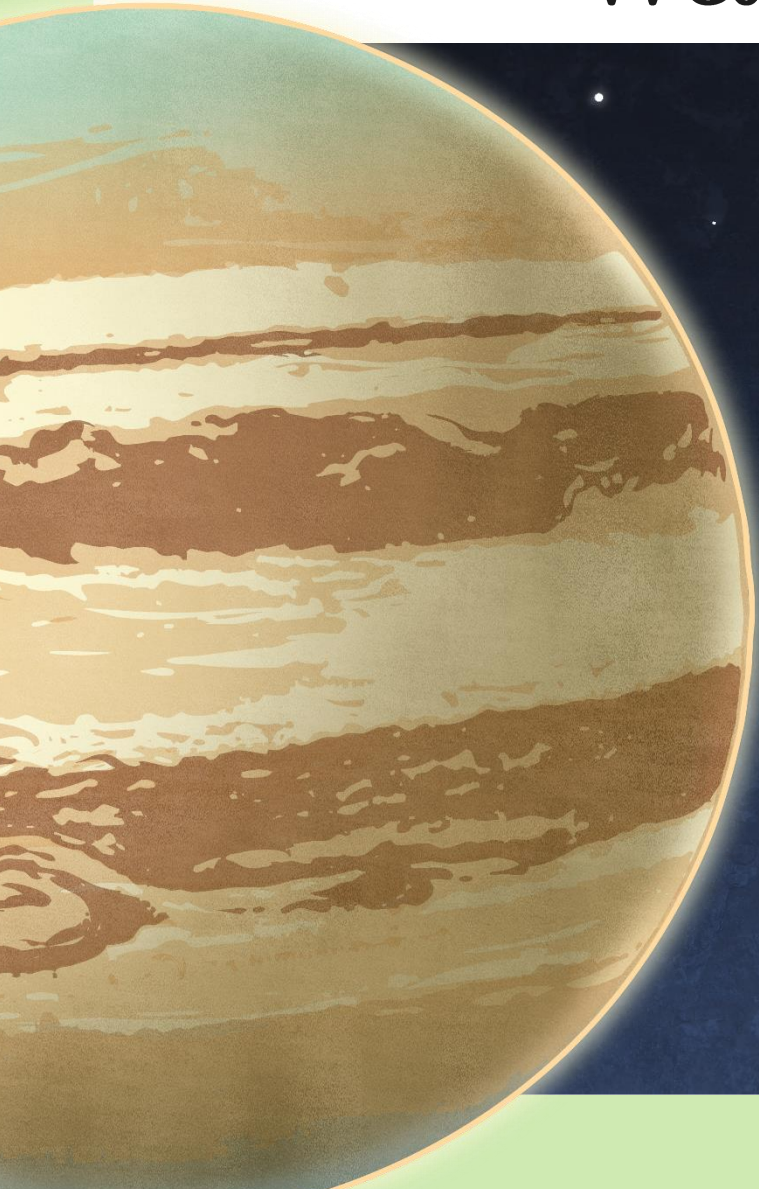
Weight and Mass

An object's mass will stay the same even if it is in a place with weaker gravity, like the Moon.

• However, an object's **weight** can change! If the object were on the Moon, although it would have the same mass, it would weigh much less as the gravity would not be pulling it down as strongly. The Moon's gravity is much weaker than the Earth's.



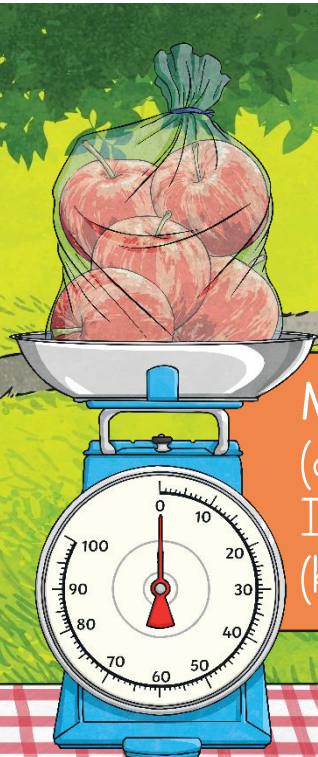
Weight and Mass



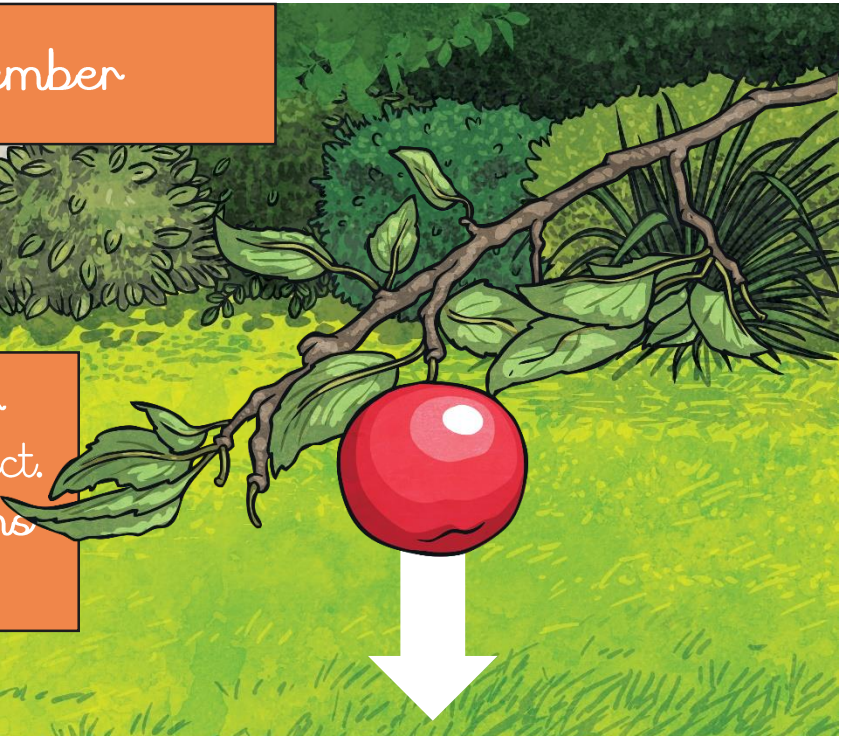
Jupiter is a much bigger planet than Earth so it has a stronger gravitational pull. Although an object would have the same mass on Jupiter as anywhere else, it would **weigh** much more due to the gravity pulling it more strongly.

Weight and Mass

Remember



Mass is how much matter (or 'stuff') is inside an object. It is measured in kilograms (kg).



Weight is how strongly gravity is pulling an object down. It is measured in newtons (N).