

EAL & NEW ARRIVALS · GRADES 2–6

Pre-Teaching Vocabulary

A simple lesson template

Why pre-teach?

EAL learners often miss key learning not because they can't understand the concept, but because one or two unfamiliar words derail their comprehension. Pre-teaching is 5 minutes before the lesson where you isolate those words and make them familiar. Research on EAL pedagogy consistently identifies pre-teaching as one of the highest-impact, lowest-effort interventions a mainstream teacher can make.

Step 1: Identify 3–5 key words

Read your lesson plan. Highlight every word the EAL child might not know. Now narrow it down to 3–5 — the words MOST critical to the lesson. Don't pre-teach 15 words. Pick the ones that, if missed, would make the lesson impossible. For a Year 4 science lesson on the water cycle, you might pick: EVAPORATE, CONDENSE, PRECIPITATION, CYCLE, VAPOUR.



Step 2: For each word, do this

Word: _____ 1. SAY IT (you say, child repeats, twice) 2. WRITE IT (write it big, on a sticky note or whiteboard) 3. SHOW IT (a picture, an action, a real object) 4. USE IT (put it in a simple sentence) 5. CHECK (ask the child to use it in their own sentence) Keep it concrete. 'Evaporate' = 'water turns into invisible gas and floats up' (mime it).

5-minute pre-teach planner

Word	Picture / action	Sentence	Child's response
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____

When to do this

PRE-TEACH options: • 5 minutes before the lesson — pull the EAL child to a side table • At the start of the lesson, with a TA — TA does pre-teach while you settle the rest • Day before the lesson — send a vocabulary card home for the family to look at • Group it with other EAL learners — pre-teach to 2-3 children at once AVOID: • Pre-teaching during break or lunch (they need the break too) • Doing it as a worksheet (loses the verbal repetition) • Using too many words (5 maximum)

