



THE INSTRUCTION CHECK

Make task language clear before students start.



THE IDEA

Instructions are one of the biggest language barriers for EAL learners.

Checking and unpacking instructions before a task helps students understand what to do, reduces confusion and builds independence.

A quick check now saves time, stress and off-task behaviour later.



IN THE CLASSROOM

- Read or display instructions clearly.
- Check key words and phrases students may not know.
- Ask students to explain what they need to do.
- Break complex instructions into smaller steps.
- Use visuals, examples or gestures to support meaning.
- Confirm understanding before students begin.

HOW TO USE IT

1



READ THE INSTRUCTIONS

- Read the instructions aloud or display them.
- Students follow along.
- Notice any key vocabulary or complex phrases.

2



CHECK UNDERSTANDING

- Ask: "What do you need to do?"
- Invite students to explain in their own words.
- Clarify any unclear parts.

3



UNPACK AND SEQUENCE

- Break instructions into clear steps.
- Number or sequence them.
- Check each step for understanding.

4



SUPPORT WITH VISUALS AND EXAMPLES

- Show an example or model the task.
- Use visuals, diagrams or gestures.
- Highlight or bold key words if possible.

5



CONFIRM BEFORE YOU START

- Ask a student to repeat the steps.
- Check again: "What's the first thing you do?"
- Give students time to ask questions.



WHY IT WORKS

Clear instructions reduce language overload, build confidence and ensure students can focus on the learning—not the confusion.



EAL UPGRADE

- Pre-teach key vocabulary from the instructions.
- Provide sentence starters: "I need to...", "First, I will...", "Then, I will..."
- Use visuals or a step-by-step graphic organiser.



TRY IT TOMORROW

- Choose a task you are teaching.
- Unpack the instructions using the 5 steps above.
- Notice the difference in student understanding and engagement.



TEACHER LANGUAGE

"What do we need to do?"
 "Can you say that in your own words?"
 "What's the first step?"
 "Does anyone need anything clarified?"

**DUNCAN
ROSE**

EAL • LANGUAGE • LEARNING