

Vocabulary Continuum

Choose vocabulary that expresses the intended degree or relationship.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose words that vary along a meaningful dimension, not just a list of synonyms.

Teach it in four steps

1. Set a dimension such as certainty or intensity.
2. Pairs place words along a line and discuss disputed positions.
3. Test each word in the same sentence to hear the change in meaning.
4. Choose the word that best fits the available evidence.

Worked classroom example

Science: possible → likely → very likely → certain. “This result makes the explanation likely” differs from “This result proves it is certain.”

Teacher prompt: “Which detail supports your explanation? Show me how you know.”

Check understanding

Give limited evidence and ask learners to reject an overconfident wording.

Fade the support

Remove the continuum and ask learners to justify their degree of certainty.

Adapt it across subjects

Humanities: rank language of certainty in competing interpretations.

Maths: compare approximate, close and exact in statements about measurement.

Adjust the language support

A1-A2 access: keep the subject goal; use visuals, a small word bank, pointing or drawing and partner rehearsal. Use a home language to establish meaning where helpful.

B1-B2 extension: ask for fuller explanations, precise subject vocabulary and qualifications. Reduce sentence openings when learners can organise the response independently.

These are starting points, not placement rules. Judge support from the learner’s response to this task; proficiency can differ across skills.