

Vocabulary Sort

Organise vocabulary by meaningful subject relationships.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a small set of terms and a sorting rule connected to the subject concept.

Teach it in four steps

1. Introduce the sorting criterion with one example.
2. Pairs sort the words and mark uncertain choices.
3. Discuss a borderline item using evidence or a definition.
4. Change the criterion and explain why the grouping changes.

Worked classroom example

Science: sort melting, freezing, evaporation and condensation by direction of state change; then regroup by whether energy is transferred to or from the substance.

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

Check understanding

Use a new term or diagram and ask for the criterion, not just the pile.

Fade the support

Remove category labels and ask learners to propose a useful classification.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: sort quadrilaterals by properties, allowing overlapping categories.

Humanities: sort causes into short-term and long-term, discussing disputed cases.

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.