

One Word Is Not an Answer

Extend a key word into an explanation that shows understanding.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a question where a single correct word conceals whether the learner understands the relationship.

Teach it in four steps

1. Accept the key word as a useful start.
2. Ask for a reason, evidence or relationship appropriate to the question.
3. Offer a short opening if needed.
4. Return with a different example and seek a complete explanation.

Worked classroom example

Science: “Gravity” becomes “The ball accelerates downwards because gravity produces a downward resultant force.”

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

Check understanding

Does the learner explain the mechanism rather than repeat the key word?

Fade the support

Withdraw the opening and invite the learner to choose an appropriate explanation structure.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: after “divide”, ask why division suits the problem.

Humanities: after naming a cause, ask how it contributed to the event.

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.