

The Vocabulary Recycling Rule

Reuse vocabulary in fresh contexts after a gap.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a few previously taught words and schedule them in fresh contexts.

Teach it in four steps

1. Retrieve the words without the original list.
2. Reconnect each word to its meaning and a prior example.
3. Use the words in a different subject task or representation.
4. Return after another gap and check independent use.

Worked classroom example

Science: retrieve resultant force from a trolley lesson, then apply it to a parachutist diagram with changed force sizes.

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

Check understanding

Can learners use the word accurately in the new context without copying a previous sentence?

Fade the support

Remove the reminder list and ask learners to choose relevant vocabulary themselves.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: reuse proportion in recipes, maps and graphs.

Humanities: reuse perspective when comparing different source types.

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.