

The 60-Second Retrieval Routine

Retrieve an important idea and respond to the evidence.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose one important idea from a previous lesson and a quick response format.

Teach it in four steps

1. Give a short no-notes recall prompt.
2. Allow about a minute for an individual response.
3. Compare with a model or check criteria and correct a gap.
4. Use the pattern of errors to select the next teaching step.

Worked classroom example

Science: "Sketch a liquid particle arrangement and label two features." Check closeness and irregular arrangement, not decorative accuracy.

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

Check understanding

Repeat later with a different prompt to see whether the correction was retained.

Fade the support

Remove the response template while keeping a clear learning target.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: retrieve one method and explain its first step.

Humanities: retrieve a cause and explain its connection to the outcome.

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.