

Give Them Processing Time

Give learners a purposeful route through processing time.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a demanding question and decide what useful processing could look like.

Teach it in four steps

1. Ask the question and avoid immediately rephrasing it.
2. Allow quiet time to jot, sketch or identify a key word.
3. Invite partner rehearsal when appropriate.
4. Collect responses and distinguish unfinished processing from misunderstanding.

Worked classroom example

Science: after showing a force diagram, learners first identify the larger force privately, then explain the resultant direction.

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

Check understanding

Ask for the reasoning after the pause; longer silence alone is not the goal.

Fade the support

Let learners choose their own processing approach instead of prescribing a note format.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: allow calculation or sketching before an explanation.

Humanities: allow rereading a source before judging its purpose.

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.