

Every Subject Has a Language

Make disciplinary thinking visible through its language.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose an authentic subject task and identify the language that makes expert thinking visible.

Teach it in four steps

1. Name the disciplinary thinking: explain, justify, interpret or evaluate.
2. Show a short successful response.
3. Discuss how language expresses the subject relationship.
4. Apply the same move to new subject evidence.

Worked classroom example

Science explains mechanisms; maths justifies relationships; history qualifies interpretations using sources. A connective is useful only when it expresses the intended reasoning.

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

Check understanding

Ask learners to explain why a language choice fits the task.

Fade the support

Move from labelled models to independent choices appropriate to the question.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: justify why a rule holds, not only state the answer.

Humanities: qualify a claim when the available evidence has limits.

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.