

The Hidden Language of Practical Work

Build language into safe, thoughtful practical work.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Identify the language needed before, during and after one practical task.

Teach it in four steps

1. Connect equipment names and safety language to real objects.
2. Model one instruction and ask learners to demonstrate it.
3. Rehearse an observation using quantities, units and sequence.
4. Use the observations to explain and evaluate the result.

Worked classroom example

Science: "The temperature rose from 22 °C to 28 °C" records evidence; a conclusion must then connect the rise to energy transfer and consider limitations.

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

Check understanding

Ask learners to distinguish an observation from an explanation and identify one possible measurement limitation.

Fade the support

Remove the observation frame while retaining safety instructions and essential technical terms.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: communicate measurements and units during a construction task.

Humanities: record fieldwork observations separately from interpretations.

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.