

First Read: Gist

Use the first read to establish the central idea without stopping for every unfamiliar word.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a short text and a main-idea question that does not require every detail.

Teach it in four steps

1. Use the first read to establish the central idea without stopping for every unfamiliar word.
2. Read once without stopping at every unfamiliar word.
3. Choose or write the central idea in one sentence.
4. Check that the statement covers the whole section rather than one attractive detail.

Worked example: First Read: Gist

After a paragraph about evaporation, “It explains how liquid can change to gas at the surface” gives the gist. A single temperature reading is a detail.

Teacher prompt: “Show the relationship and explain the choice you made.”

Check understanding

Ask which sentence would still summarise the paragraph if one example were removed.

Fade the support

Remove the multiple-choice gist options and ask for an independent summary.

Adapt it across subjects

Humanities: identify the central argument before evaluating details. Maths: establish what a problem is about before calculating.

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.