Read the Diagram Too

Read the labels, arrows and relationships in a diagram alongside the accompanying prose.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Select a meaningful visual and a small number of labels or relationships.

Teach it in four steps

1. Read the labels, arrows and relationships in a diagram alongside the accompanying prose.
2. Locate a feature learners can point to.
3. Connect the feature to precise language.
4. Use that language to explain a changed visual, checking each claim against evidence.

Worked example: Read the Diagram Too

A force diagram labels 15 N upwards and 10 N downwards. Learners explain the 5 N upward resultant; the arrows do not by themselves establish the current direction of motion.

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

Check understanding

Change one feature or label and check that the interpretation changes with the evidence.

Fade the support

Remove supplied labels selectively and ask learners to choose their own.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: graph or geometric diagram. Humanities: a map or source image with a stated interpretive limit.

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.