One Idea Per Step: Simplify Complex Instructions

Give one action at a time when a task has several instructions, then check understanding before moving on.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Use the four steps with a short task from this week's subject lesson; collect one response from every learner.

Teach it in four steps

1. Separate the actions: Rewrite a long direction as short numbered steps.
2. Model the first move: Show what to do with the materials or text.
3. Check and continue: Ask a learner to restate the next action before it begins.
4. Reconnect the purpose: At the end, explain how the steps built towards the learning goal.

Use the routine

Science: Use a Frayer-style model for evaporation: define it, sketch it, give a puddle example and distinguish it from boiling.

"What helped you make sense of that?" "Show how your evidence supports your answer."

Check understanding

Look for an independent response that shows the subject relationship, not only repetition of the model. Compare it with the task goal and identify the next useful teaching step.

Fade the support

Keep the subject goal and source intact. Offer one brief model, visual or language prompt, then give learners time to try it independently.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: Sort examples of equivalent fractions and explain why 2/3 and 4/6 belong together.

Humanities: Compare two sources about migration and name one useful similarity and difference.

English: Build a word network for "isolated" using a quotation, image, synonym and original sentence.

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.