The Example Ladder

Order three examples from easiest to hardest and explain what additional thinking each one needs.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Choose a concept, a clear example and a near miss.

Teach it in four steps

1. Order three examples from easiest to hardest and explain what additional thinking each one needs.
2. Name the features that make the example belong.
3. Contrast a near miss and explain the decisive difference.
4. Introduce the label and apply it to a fresh case.

Worked example: The Example Ladder

A rectangle has four right angles. A slanted parallelogram shares some properties but does not meet this defining feature. Seeing the distinction matters more than repeating the label.

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

Check understanding

Present a new example or near miss and require a decision justified by the defining feature.

Fade the support

Remove the feature list but retain a new example and non-example.

Adapt it across subjects

Science: distinguish evaporation from boiling. Humanities: distinguish evidence from an opinion about the evidence.

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.