Rank Explanations by Strength

Compare three explanations and rank them by how well they use evidence and subject knowledge.

5 min preparation | Science, Maths and Humanities

Before the lesson

Prepare two responses to the same question with a meaningful difference in quality.

Teach it in four steps

1. Compare three explanations and rank them by how well they use evidence and subject knowledge.
2. Read both responses for meaning.
3. Annotate the difference that improves evidence, precision or explanation.
4. Close the models and apply that move to a new question.

Worked example: Rank Explanations by Strength

“The trolley speeds up” describes a change. “The forward force exceeds the opposing force, so it accelerates forwards” explains the relationship. Highlight the mechanism, not merely the longer answer.

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

Check understanding

Check a fresh response for the identified quality move.

Fade the support

Remove labels and ask learners to evaluate their own response against the question.

Adapt it across subjects

Maths: compare result-only and justified solutions. Humanities: compare supported and unsupported 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.