

Explaining

giving understanding to another person

How can I make my explanations effective?

- Plan it carefully
- Be clear about the type of explanation you are providing
- Use the relevant connectives (see below)
- Have a key idea
- Plan a logical sequence
- Use examples or props to illustrate your ideas

Different types of explanation – *and some useful connectives*

What?

purpose and objectives of lesson – *in order to, as a result, finally, initially*

How?

procedures – *first of all, next, then, take care to, after that, I did this by, finally*
processes – *firstly, consequently, additionally, meanwhile*

Why?

cause and effect – *when, because, however, this makes, this causes, as a result*

Abstract

attitudes and values – *however, because, alternatively*
concept – *so, and so, therefore, because, in order to*
relationships – *the shape of the, as ... the ..., increases/decreases, the more the ..., the less the ..., in conjunction with*

How will I know if I am explaining well?



Good explanation checklist

Clear structure 1. check current understanding 2. break down into distinct parts 3. sum up/recap	Key ideas identified Could be a central principle, generalisation, example, analogy.	Dynamic opening A tease or hook to get pupils interested. Could be startling fact, or something not obviously connected.	Clarity Vary the pitch, tone and volume of your voice. Body language is important, especially hands.
Signposting Use emphasising phrases such as "and the important thing is ..." or "there are three stages: first"	Examples and non-examples Useful to illustrate a point with an example, a non example helps pupils to build a more complex understanding.	Models and analogies To be able to visualise objects that are too big or small, processes that can't be directly seen, abstract ideas.	Props A picture or object is particularly helpful to visual learners.
Questions Helps you to monitor pupils' understanding.	Connect to pupils' experience Gives pupils a base on which to build new learning, and helps them to make links.	Repetition Helps to emphasise a key point. Use much more in speech than you would in writing.	Humour Helps keep pupils' attention.

What if things go wrong?

My pupils aren't interested

Have you used a tease or hook to stimulate interest?
 What about asking pupils what they think you're going to say, and then to listen to see who is right?
 Is your explanation actually necessary for the task pupils are going to do?
 Did you plan so that everyone could understand, but therefore made it too simplistic?

My explanations are too long

Did you plan the key elements in advance so that your explanation was focused?
 Did you break the explanation up with questioning (even if it's simply "can you predict what I'm going to say next?")

Often my pupils end up more confused than before I started!

Do your pupils understand all the vocabulary you plan to use?
 Do your pupils know why you are giving them this explanation (what they are going to learn?)
 Did you start your explanation by checking what the pupils already knew (and finding out any misconceptions)?

It just seems to be me talking.

Have you used analogies and models? If so it is often better to make them visual, especially for abstract and difficult concepts.

I can't tell if my pupils are developing understanding.

Do you build points for checking understanding into your explanations?
 Do you plan questions you could ask at these points?
 Do you use "traffic lighting" or other feedback methods?

My pupils keep interrupting me with questions.

Do you tell them in advance that you have planned opportunities for questions into your explanation?
 Can you simply thank them for the question and tell them you'll be coming to that shortly.