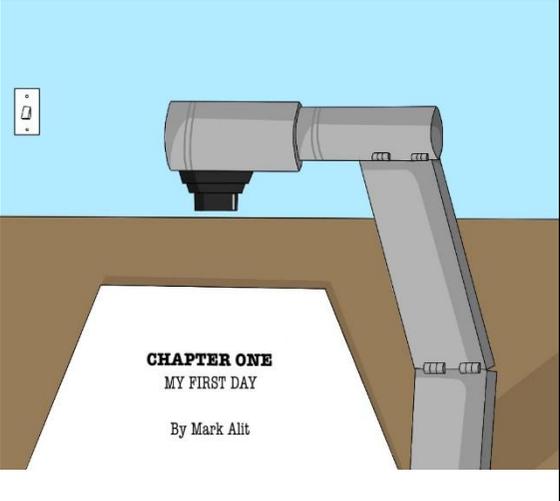
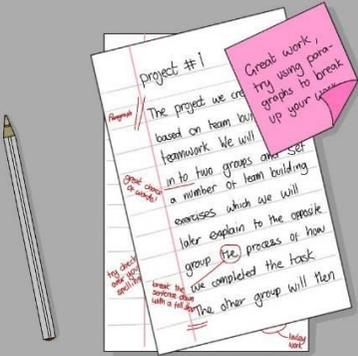


Level up Explaining	What is it?	Application of this activity	How does it help learners to make progress?	Teacher reflections from this activity
<p>Using stories</p>		<p>Research suggests that storytelling and story listening capacities are hard wired into the brain. They are the basic way in which all human beings learn about the world, about themselves, and about each other. Above all, the best stories are multi-sensory, enable learners empathise and are highly memorable. Marketing companies know this and use story to persuade us to buy. Make sure that any anecdote, analogy, parable, case history, or story that you use with your class, is relevant to the key elements or themes that you want to explain or 'sell'.</p>	<p>Stories can be personal, humorous, shocking, or instructive; they may contain values and perspectives.</p> <p>For example, the push-pull factors associated with migration into USA from Mexico are much more memorable for learners if they are woven into the story of Enrique Canchola who was caught trying to smuggle himself across the US border disguised as a car seat! Click the link here if this story has grabbed your attention! http://bit.ly/1rrLKu8</p>	<p><i>Austin's butterfly as told by Ron Berger is another great example of story is used to 'sell' a message. This message is the importance of re-drafting work and listening to feedback. See the link here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqh1MRWZjms Could you use a similar story with your class to emphasize a similar message? How could you unleash the power of story to make new learning memorable and engaging?</i></p>
<p>Using a visualiser</p>		<p>The old saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words' sums up the value of using a visualiser or ipad app such as 'explaineverything' to help explain more clearly. Showing information visually on screen and then using the image to discuss with the class, or alternatively challenge learners to amend, update or correct it, enables the teacher to get richer feedback about learners' understanding. Having a visual really helps teachers to focus learners on the detail within an example e.g. aspects of grammar or use of punctuation.</p>	<p>Visualisers can be used to draw to the attention of the class, examples of work that make the same mistake or have included a misconception. Finding and fixing faults in others' work helps learners spot the same faults in their own work or prevent them from making the same mistake themselves. Visualisers can also play a crucial role in developing high quality peer feedback. When learners see their teacher expertly explaining how to improve a piece of work using a visualiser, learners can then start to be given the same responsibility.</p>	<p><i>Do you have a sufficient number of models of excellent, and varied quality work that you could use with a visualiser to aid your explanations? What tools do you use to be able to give live feedback to learners about the way a piece of work is progressing? Ipad? Visualiser? How might you encourage learners to explain their own work using a visualiser?</i></p>

<p>Talking through the thinking</p>		<p>Before commencing a task, learners need to plan effectively how they are going to address it. Careful modelling by the teacher of the thinking steps of planning is key. This is about taking explaining to a deeper level. A good example of this occurred in an A-level Business studies lesson. The teacher is about to read through an exam case study with her class. Before starting to read, she asks her class ‘what clues or prompts should we be looking for when we read this?’ She is seeking confirmation that her class are thinking like ‘expert’ learners while they are reading. As she reads through the passage, she will give her class a commentary of her thinking, the questions she is asking herself and why she is underlining certain information.</p>	<p>Explaining not just the ‘what to do?’, but also the ‘why and how to?’ is crucial to helping learners to both, remember the new learning as well as be more able to apply it to new situations. After all, it is much harder for us to remember information we don’t truly understand.</p> <p>After explaining the thinking, two learners can be chosen to model the explaining to the rest of the class using a new example. One acts as silent modeller, while the other provides a commentary about how and why the silent modeller is doing what they are doing. The rest of the class are challenged to identify any missing elements in the modelling that need correcting.</p>	<p><i>What are the thinking steps learners need to carry out to complete the task successfully?</i></p> <p><i>How could you model the thinking used by examiners or other assessors to ensure learners gain a deeper understanding of success criteria?</i></p> <p><i>Which steps in the thinking process do learners traditionally struggle with or miss out? How can you make these steps clearer?</i></p>
<p>Rehearsing with colleagues</p>		<p>The best way to develop the skill of explaining is to practise, practise, practise!</p> <p>There are several reasons why some teacher’s explanations are ineffective. Sometimes they are too short and miss out important features that have to be added later in the lesson when the teacher remembers them. On other occasions, explanations are too long winded and the presence of too many anecdotes or repetition leaves learners with information overload.</p>	<p>Practising your explanations with colleagues can be a great way to hone your skills, especially when everyone has a go and offers each other constructive feedback. Even better, why not video yourself explaining something to a class.</p> <p>Both are great ways to level up your own skills and to support each other’s development. When teachers can better articulate the features of a piece of work it helps to enhance learner clarity. Greater learner clarity means fewer errors in their work.</p>	<p><i>How often do you rehearse your explanations when planning and preparing lessons? Or is this something that is done spontaneously?</i></p> <p><i>Have you ever videoed yourself to assess your explaining skills? Why not have a go?</i></p> <p><i>Who else could you rehearse your explanations with?</i></p>

Explaining is a key skill in the armoury of teachers. Yet it is often hugely underrated. The better you are at explaining, the clearer learners will be about the steps they need to take and/or the ingredients required for a high quality piece of work. The ideas within this 4by4 come from teachers who have gone through the [Outstanding Teaching Intervention \(OTI\)](https://www.malit.org.uk). To find out more about OTI or our other courses contact us at www.malit.org.uk