

Explaining Well

Education

The features that separate an explanation pupils follow from one they merely hear.

An explanation is designed, not improvised, however fluent the teacher.

Build it from

A concrete example before the abstraction

Familiar knowledge as the starting point

Small steps with a check after each

An analogy, plus where the analogy breaks

Non-examples as well as examples

Avoid

Two new ideas explained at once

Talking over a diagram pupils are reading

Tangents that pull in extra vocabulary

Jargon before its meaning is established

Explaining for longer than they can attend

Dual coding: words spoken alongside a picture help. Words spoken alongside the same words in text compete for the same channel.