

## Independent Practice



### Purpose of Independent Practice

Independent practice shows that students can apply new learning without teacher support. It strengthens long-term memory because it requires sustained, effortful thinking. It should only be used when students are ready, based on checks for understanding.

### Learning Problem: Lessons Don't Demand Enough Independent Work

- **Plan backwards** — Start with the final independent task and design the lesson sequence to build towards it.
- **Align lesson aims** — Clear end-points help teachers build in more meaningful independent practice.

### 2. Tasks Are Appropriate, but Student Work Looks Identical

- **Check I/We/You transitions** — Modelling and independent work must be clearly separated. Use a different example for modelling.
- **Use structured talk tasks** — Activities like *think, write, pair, re-write, share* help students form their own ideas before writing.

### 3. Not Enough Time Is Given to Independent Tasks

- **Print what doesn't require thought** — Avoid long periods of copying; use printed notes where appropriate.
- **Reduce content overload** — Prioritise depth over breadth if lessons are too content-heavy.

### 4. Students Have the Skills but Lack the Knowledge

- **Improve retrieval practice** — Key facts should be revisited often enough to be recalled effortlessly.
- **Clarify core knowledge** — Subject leaders should define essential facts, quotes, events, etc., and ensure consistency across teachers.

### 5. Students Have the Knowledge but Lack the Skills

- **Model thinking aloud** — Make the mental processes behind complex tasks explicit.
- **Provide clear structures and success criteria** — Use shared paragraph frames, essay structures, and checklists. Fade writing frames gradually.

### Key Messages

- Independent practice is the *end result* of effective modelling, retrieval, curriculum design, and scaffolding.
- When independent work breaks down, the cause is usually earlier in the sequence.
- Strengthening the whole learning journey leads to more confident, capable, and autonomous learners.