Precision Teaching: your first session

The idea in one sentence

Teach a small skill, do a short timed check, record the result and use it to guide the next teaching session.

1. Choose one small skill

Example: read the words the, said, have, like and come aloud. Choose a manageable set the pupil is learning. This is See-Say: the pupil sees a word and says it.

2. Teach and practise first

Show one word. Say it together and let the pupil try. If they struggle, model it and practise again. Build accuracy before speed. The teaching is a separate part of the session.

3. Explain the check

Say: “Read each word aloud. I will count your answers.” Use 30 seconds for this example. A short timed check is sometimes called a probe. Keep it calm; stop if the pupil becomes distressed.

4. Run the check

Show one word at a time and repeat the five words as needed. Mark each correct answer and each incorrect answer. Agree how to score pauses and self-corrections before starting; keep those rules consistent. Save corrections and teaching for after the check.

5. Record what happened

Example: 10 correct answers and 2 errors in 30 seconds. These are invented results, not expected scores. Raw counts must be whole numbers.

Keep beside you

Five word cards, a 30-second timer, the daily recording sheet and a pencil. Or use the free app. Watch the captioned animation at precisionteaching.uk/start-here.html.

Record, review and decide what next

6. Convert the counts to rates

Rate per minute = raw count x (60 / seconds). For 30 seconds multiply by 2: 10 correct = 20 correct/min; 2 errors = 4 errors/min. For a 1-minute check use the counts unchanged. For 2 minutes divide by 2.

7. Repeat and look for progress

Practise briefly, then repeat the same check in later sessions. Keep the word set, duration and scoring rules consistent. Plot correct and error rates separately. One result does not show a trend.

What should I look for?

Look for more correct answers and fewer errors over several sessions. Check whether the pupil can also use the skill outside the timed task. If progress stalls, review the teaching, difficulty and pupil comfort rather than simply asking them to go faster.

When should I change the words?

Use staff judgement and any agreed individual target. Look for accurate, fluent responses and success outside the timed check. When you introduce a new word set, start a new intervention or clearly mark the change so results remain interpretable.

Paper or app: the same routine

On paper, enter raw counts on the daily recording sheet and chart the per-minute rates. In the app, choose See-Say and a 30-second duration; it converts counts automatically. For a paper result, use “Record a result” and enter the raw counts.

Protect the records

Use pupil initials and follow school procedures. App records stay in this browser on this device. Click “Download backup (.json)” regularly and store the backup securely. Keep the app open in one tab.

Remember

Teach first. The short check measures progress; it does not replace teaching. An ordinary progress graph is not a Standard Celeration Chart.