

TPA EDUCATION · LANGUAGE EDITION

The TPA *Tutor Guide*

How to teach with a TPA Language Edition packet.

LOWER DIVISION

CEFR B1 to B1+

UPPER DIVISION

CEFR B2 to B2+

The packet gives you the structure.

You bring the relationship.

One packet, one idea, *five days*

Each TPA packet begins with one important idea and follows it across five days. The work develops gradually: students are introduced to the topic, asked to look more closely, consider different perspectives, and eventually bring their thinking together in writing.

You do not need to invent a lesson sequence or search for extra material. The structure is already there. Your job is to help the student slow down, notice things, explain what they are thinking, and become a little more confident each time they respond.

Most pages combine a short reading with something else worth studying closely: a map, chart, image, diagram, quotation, or first-hand account. The challenge levels then give you several ways into the material.

The five challenge levels

Lhasa begins with observation and straightforward speaking.

Basecamp I asks the student to explain an idea in their own words.

Basecamp II introduces reasoning, comparison, judgment, or taking a position.

Ascent moves that thinking into short written responses.

Summit asks for a fuller, more developed piece of writing supported by evidence.

Reading, speaking and writing support one another.

English is the medium

These are not English exercises built around invented topics. Students use English to explore history, science, geography, society and the larger challenges people face in the world.

Vocabulary, grammar and academic language still develop, but they develop while the student is trying to understand something, explain an idea, defend a position or make sense of evidence. The language has a job to do.

Where your student is *starting*

A student working around B1 can usually understand straightforward reading and manage everyday conversation. What often becomes harder is using English for more demanding academic thinking: explaining why something happened, comparing two ideas, defending an opinion, or putting several thoughts together clearly. That gap is normal.

Students will often understand more than they can comfortably say, and they may be able to say more than they can write. The packet is designed to help close those gaps gradually rather than expecting everything at once.

What you may notice at first

A student may hesitate when asked an open question. Give them a little time.

Their spoken answer may be much stronger than the one they eventually write. That is not a problem; the speaking is helping them prepare.

They may become especially interested in a photograph, map, chart or unexpected detail. Follow that curiosity when you can.

What you are really helping them do

The student may be reading about an empire, a river system, biodiversity, migration, energy or food. The English matters, but so does the thinking. They are learning to use a second language for real academic work.

That is a substantial achievement, and it is worth remembering when a sentence comes out awkwardly or a written response takes longer than expected.

Running the *lesson*

1. Read together, then let the student take over.

You might begin a passage together, especially if the language is dense or unfamiliar, but try not to carry the reading for them. Step in when something genuinely needs unpacking.

2. Give the visual material time.

A map, chart or diagram is not there simply to decorate the page. Ask what the student notices first. Let them point things out, wonder aloud, make guesses and ask questions before you begin explaining.

3. Let the student talk before asking them to write.

Conversation is often rehearsal for writing. If a student has already explained an idea aloud, the written response usually becomes easier and clearer. If time is tight, preserve that discussion whenever you can.

4. Ask them to explain an idea in another way.

If something seems only half understood, ask for a second explanation: “How would you say that to someone your age?” or “How would you explain it to someone who had never seen this before?”

5. Keep handwriting part of the routine.

Written challenge responses belong in a notebook or on paper. The slower pace is intentional. Students have time to choose words, organize an idea and see their own thinking accumulate over time.

You know your student better than the packet does. Use the structure, but do not be afraid to pause, circle back, or spend longer on something that has caught their attention.

The week, and how to *use it*

The full-page visuals

Several times during a packet, the usual challenge structure may give way to a full-page photograph, map, infographic or other visual source.

Slow down there. The student does not always need another written task. Sometimes the work is simply to look carefully, notice what is happening, describe it, ask questions and make connections with what came before.

Friday and the final response

By the end of the week, the student has encountered the central idea several times and from several angles. The final task asks them to bring some of that thinking together.

Before they begin writing, ask them to tell you what they think the answer is. Talk it through. Ask what evidence supports it. If something remains uncertain, let that uncertainty stay visible rather than forcing a neat answer.

Using the points

The points on the page are there to encourage challenge and effort. They should not turn the lesson into a race for perfect scores. Notice the student who tries a harder question, improves an answer, uses a new word naturally, changes their mind after looking again, or asks a genuinely good question.

Pacing

A Lower Division packet contains roughly twelve to fourteen hours of work.

For a student meeting twice each week, that may stretch comfortably across about six weeks.

There is no prize for finishing quickly.

What changes at *B2 and above*

By Upper Division, the student is generally able to use English with much more independence. The basic teaching approach remains the same, but the questions become more demanding. Description gives way to explanation. Explanation gives way to argument. Students begin working across several sources rather than considering each one in isolation.

The shift, in practice

LOWER DIVISION	UPPER DIVISION
Describe what the source shows	Consider what the source may leave out
Explain the idea	Explain how or why it happens
Take a position	Defend it and consider a strong objection
Write several clear sentences	Build a supported argument
Work mainly with one source	Bring several sources together

One especially important habit

Upper Division students should begin asking not only, “What does the evidence show?” but also, “What can’t it show?” A chart may leave people out. A photograph gives one moment from one point of view. A set of numbers may show a pattern without explaining its cause.

Recognizing those limits does not weaken an argument. It makes the argument more careful.

Knowing where evidence ends and judgment begins is one of the most valuable habits these students can learn.

Running the lesson *at B2+*

Everything that matters in Lower Division still matters here: read carefully, work with the visuals, allow discussion before writing, and give students time to think. At this level, though, you can ask for more.

1. Push beyond the first opinion.

If a student takes a position, ask why. Then ask what someone on the other side might say. They do not have to change their view, but they should understand the strongest challenge to it.

2. Keep asking about limits.

What is missing from the source? What would we need to know before becoming more certain? Could another source lead us to a different conclusion?

3. Use the visual pages as real sources.

When the text disappears and the student is left with an image, map or diagram, resist the temptation to fill the silence. Let them do the noticing first.

4. Give harder questions more time.

Some Upper Division tasks involve trade-offs, systems and consequences that are not immediately obvious. A pause is not a failure. Often it means the student is actually thinking.

5. Expect structure in the writing.

A strong response should make a clear claim, use evidence, recognize an important limitation where appropriate, and arrive at a reasoned judgment.

You can challenge the student without turning every conversation into a debate. The aim is not to catch them out. It is to help them become more precise about what they think and why.

Bringing the week *together*

The final work in an Upper Division packet asks the student to draw from several of the week's sources rather than responding to one in isolation.

By then, they should have enough material to make a claim, support it with evidence, acknowledge what remains uncertain, and reach a judgment of their own.

Before they begin writing, talk it through. Ask what they intend to argue. Ask which evidence matters most. Offer a reasonable objection or alternative interpretation and see what they do with it. That conversation is part of the work.

Pacing

Upper Division packets are denser and generally require more writing. Allow roughly fourteen to sixteen hours of teaching time, or around seven weeks for a student meeting twice weekly.

Again, that is guidance rather than a deadline.

Where this is taking them

Over time, students should become better able to read a demanding source, explain what it is saying, compare evidence, respond to another point of view and write with increasing clarity and restraint.

Those are English-language skills, certainly. They are also the habits of a capable student.

The packet provides the material and the progression. What makes it work is the conversation around it: the questions you ask, the time you allow, the encouragement you give, and the expectation that the student can think seriously about something worthwhile.

That is the method. And after that, much of it really is practice.