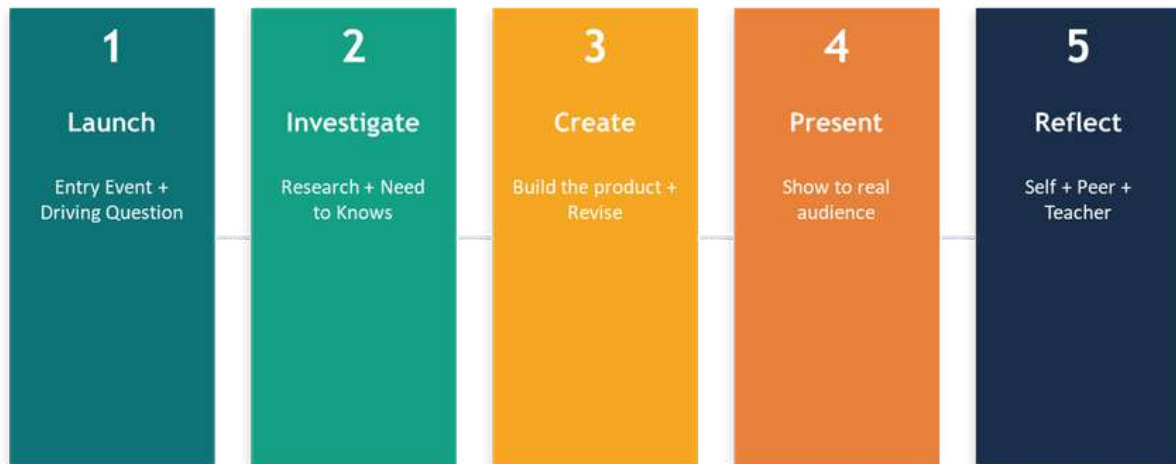


Project-Based Learning

The 5 phases of PBL



Phase 1:

- The **entry event** **ignites** student curiosity. It can be: a video, images, a guest speaker, a problem, a mystery.
- After the entry event, students generate their 'Need to Know' questions.
- The Driving Question emerges from these questions, or the teacher presents it.
- The launch sets the **tone** for the whole project. Make it engaging!
- Students should feel: curious, excited, and aware of what they will make.
- Share the assessment rubric with students on **day 1** of the project.

Phase 2:

- Students research. They use books, internet, interviews, and experts. Teacher **doesn't** give all answers.

Phase 3:

- Students design and build their product. Use the Lean cycle: draft → feedback → improve → repeat.

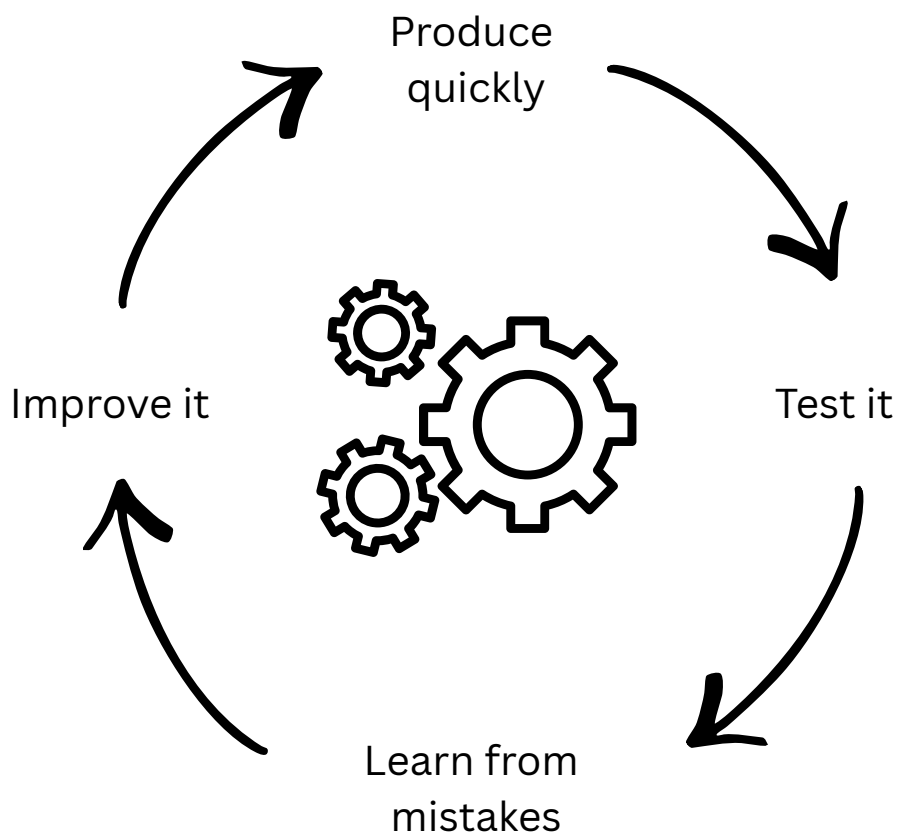
Phase 4:

- Students show their work to a **real** audience. Not just the teacher!
- Audience examples: school community, parents, local government, NGOs, experts.

Phase 5:

- Students look back and ask: What did I learn? What am I proud of? What would I do differently?
- Reflection happens **throughout** the project - not only at the end.

The Lean Cycle for PBL



Making a great Driving Question

- The big question that guides the whole project.
- It is: **open-ended** (many possible answers), **real** (connected to the world), **not Google-able**.
- It is: **feasible, worthwhile, contextualised, meaningful, and ethical**.

Formula: How can [who] [do what] so that [real-world impact]?

Example (weak): What was the impact of World War II? - simple answer which can be Googled.

Example (strong): How can students in our city create a memorial that teaches young people about the cost of war?

Different types of Driving Questions

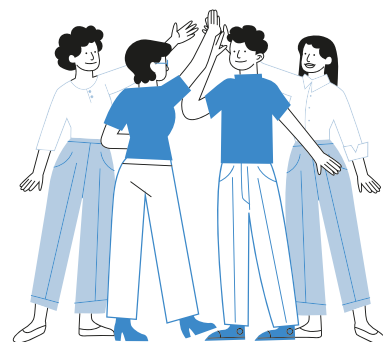
- Exploration: When do we truly grow up? / Who has power and how do they get it?
- Historical inquiry: What do we know about life in East Germany before unification and how does that impact [current element in your city]?
- Problem-solving: How can we improve traffic flow in our city?
- Controversial: Is war ever justified? / Should religion be taught in schools?
- Creative challenge: How can we design a mural that represents our community's past and present?

Tip: whatever type you choose, it must lead to investigation, multiple answers, and a real product.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **I don't have enough time!** - PBL doesn't need to be long. Start with 2-3 weeks. Choose a topic already in your curriculum. PBL is the **how**, not extra content.
2. **What if students get off topic?** - Use clear steps and regular check-ins. Give students a schedule and review it together every day. Short journals help students stay focused.
3. **How do I grade PBL?** - You use a rubric. A clear table to criteria and levels. Students see the rubric before they start, if appropriate. We build one together on day 4.
4. **What if some students do nothing?** - Give each student a clear role. Use peer assessment and individual reflection sheets to make contributions visible.
5. **Can I use PBL in a subject like Maths or Science?** - Yes! PBL works in any subject. Example: How can we use statistics to help our local sports club improve its performance?
6. **What if I'm the only teacher who does PBL?** - Start small. One project a year. Share your example with colleagues. We discuss school-wide PBL day 4 and day 5.
7. **What if students don't speak the language enough?** - PBL supports language learning naturally. Students communicate for a real purpose. To help, you could use visual scaffolding, sentence frames, and translation tools.
8. **What if students can't work in groups?** - Build collaboration skills gradually ([scaffolding](#)). Start with short partner tasks. Teach students **how** to give feedback and **how** to share roles.

PBL: unit planning



Topic:

Driving quesiton:

Entry event:

Student choice:

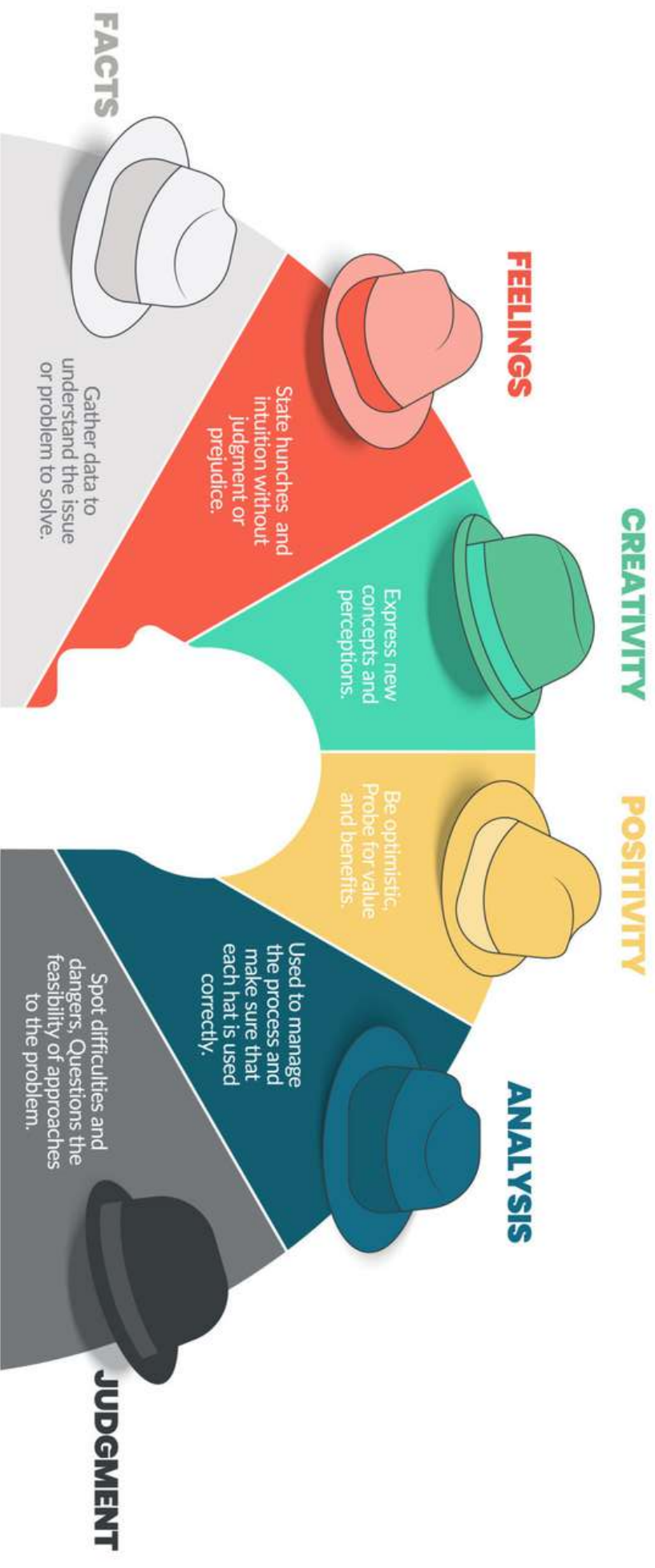
Entry event:

Student choice:

Entry event:

Student choice:





SIX THINKING HATS

Students research a famous historical figure and create a poster with key facts.

Students investigate a local environmental issue, interview community members, and propose solutions to the city council.

Students follow step-by-step instructions to build a model volcano and present how it erupts.

Students design a small business, create a budget, and pitch it to a panel of local entrepreneurs.

Students read a novel and answer comprehension questions at the end of each chapter.

Students create a documentary about food waste in their school and present recommendations to reduce it.

Students make a diorama of a rainforest ecosystem using provided materials and teacher guidelines.

Students explore the question “How can we make our school more inclusive?” and develop an action plan.

Students complete a worksheet packet on solving linear equations.

Students design and test a bridge using limited materials, then explain their design choices based on physics principles.

Students create a slideshow about a country, including population, capital, and major exports.

Students investigate how social media impacts teenagers and present findings supported by surveys and data.

Students follow a lab procedure to confirm a known scientific principle and write a report.

Students develop a public awareness campaign to reduce plastic use in their community.

Students write a five-paragraph essay on a teacher-assigned topic using a provided outline.

Students choose a real-world problem they care about, research it, and create a product or solution to address it.

Students complete an art project by replicating a famous painting using the same techniques.

Students collaborate to design a sustainable city, considering energy, transportation, and housing.

Students answer textbook questions after reading a chapter on the water cycle.

Students create a podcast explaining a current global issue and include multiple perspectives.

Traditional Projects

More teacher-directed, focus on reproducing knowledge, limited real-world application.

- Card 1 – Poster on historical figure
- Card 3 – Model volcano with set steps
- Card 5 – Novel comprehension questions
- Card 7 – Rainforest diorama
- Card 9 – Linear equations worksheet
- Card 11 – Country slideshow (fact-based)
- Card 13 – Confirmatory lab
- Card 15 – Five-paragraph essay (structured)
- Card 17 – Replicating a painting
- Card 19 – Textbook questions

PBL (Project-Based Learning)

Open-ended, real-world problem, student voice/choice, inquiry, authentic audience or impact.

- Card 2 – Environmental issue + city council proposal
- Card 4 – Business design + pitch to entrepreneurs
- Card 6 – Food waste documentary + recommendations
- Card 8 – School inclusivity action plan
- Card 10 – Bridge design + testing + explanation
- Card 12 – Social media impact + data collection
- Card 14 – Public awareness campaign
- Card 16 – Student-chosen real-world problem
- Card 18 – Sustainable city design
- Card 20 – Podcast on global issue with perspectives

“Not Sure” (Great for discussion)

You could move some of these depending on how they’re implemented:

- Card 10 (Bridge design) → Could be PBL or just a structured STEM task
 - Card 12 (Social media research) → Depends on authenticity/audience
 - Card 18 (Sustainable city) → Could be surface-level or deeply inquiry-based
- (You might intentionally move 1–2 cards from PBL into this category during the activity to spark debate.)