

Metacognition can significantly improve learning outcomes, but many pupils need support to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning effectively. Drawing upon the EEF's guidance, this resource outlines examples of effective metacognitive strategies which can be explicitly taught, modelled, and scaffolded to help pupils use them with increasing independence.

Explicit instruction

Explicit instruction of metacognitive strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating approaches to learning.

Goal setting

Teach how to set realistic learning goals before working on tasks. This can include different types of goals e.g., relating to the learning process, desired outcomes, and acquisition of skills.

Activate prior knowledge

Teach the importance of recalling strategies that previously helped or hindered learning, and how to apply this knowledge to plan approaches to new tasks.

Summarisation

Teach use of summarisation tools such as graphic organisers (mind maps, storyboards) and mnemonics to aid recall of successful strategies for specific tasks.

Modelling

Modelling the use of metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning, undertaken by both adults and pupils.

Thinking aloud

Verbalise thought processes to model strategies for learning and explain why these were selected. This includes breaking down tasks, discussing mistakes and corrections, or explaining strategies for managing emotions and maintaining focus.

Worked examples

Provide examples of completed tasks to examine the strategies used to approach these, and identify the advantages and challenges involved. This may also include using worked examples to model how to break down tasks into manageable chunks.

Self-questioning

Use self-questioning to model habits of connecting learning to prior knowledge and identifying steps needed to approach a task. Examples include: 'What do I know already?', 'What steps do I need to take?' and 'What is important to remember?'

Scaffolding

Providing scaffolds to encourage pupils' use of metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning.

Structured reflection

Prompt reflections on learning processes and task outcomes, individually or in groups. This can be supported by journals, reflective models, and question prompts. It can also 'feed-forward' to consider how pupils might approach similar tasks in the future.

Self-explanation

Invite pupils to share rationales for approaches, ideas and thinking. Asking probing questions to prompt pupils to extend and elaborate upon initial responses and encourage reflection on their learning and performance.

Exam wrappers

Prompt self-evaluation and feedback before or after assessment tasks by providing questions and activities that encourage reflection on study strategies, identify areas for improvement, and support pupils in learning from mistakes.

Questions for reflection

How can these strategies be used in different curriculum subjects to meet the needs of your pupils?
How will you scaffold pupils' use of these strategies to increase independence over time?
How will you provide feedback to improve pupils' use of these strategies?



Read more

Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning guidance report