



# 13 Examples Of Metacognitive Strategies

By Chris Drew (PhD) / February 6, 2023

Metacognition is the ability to think about your own thinking. 'Meta' means *beyond* and 'Cognition' means *thinking*. So, metacognitive strategies involve reflecting on and regulating how you think.

**Having this skill is essential for improving your own productivity and effectiveness at school or work.**



When we apply metacognitive strategies, we become better learners. We can control not only our thoughts but also our actions much more effectively.

The following meta cognitive strategies are used regularly as [teaching strategies](#) to help people learn better.



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## Examples Of Metacognitive Strategies

Read Also: [What is Flavell's Metacognitive Theory?](#)

### 1. Self-Questioning

Self-questioning involves pausing throughout a task to consciously check your own actions.

Without self-questioning, we may lack humility and awareness of our own faults.

Most importantly, we would not be able to improve because we never took the time to ask ourselves important questions like:

- Is this the best way to carry out this task?
- Did I miss something? Maybe I should check again.
- Did I follow the right procedure there?
- How could I do better next time?
- Am I looking at this task the right way?
- How can I do a better job at thinking about what I'm doing?

Good students question their actions both while they're completing the task and after finishing it (see also: 'reflection').

## 2. Meditation



Meditation involves clearing your mind. We could consider it to be a metacognitive strategy because meditators aim to:

- Clear out the chatter that goes on in our heads.
- Reach a calm and focused state that can prime us for learning.
- Be more aware of our own inner speech.

Meditation for children is becoming increasingly popular in schools because educators can see the value of this task for helping students achieve greater self-awareness in the classroom.

## 3. Reflection

Reflection involves pausing to think about a task. It is usually a cyclical process where we reflect, think of ways to improve, try again then go back to reflection.

Reflection is metacognitive only if you consciously reflect on *what your thought processes were* and *how to improve upon them next time*.

There are many models of reflection with varying steps. Most reflective cycles have at least the following phases:

- A task is planned.
- You attempt the task.
- You look at how you did the task.
- You come up with things you did well and areas for improvement.
- You plan the next task, with a focus on improving on your weaknesses.



- You try again ...
- You reflect again ...
- And so on.

Once you become skilled at reflection, you may also reflect *while* doing a task so that you can make adjustments to your thinking processes as you go. We call this sort of reflection *reflection in action* (as opposed to reflection *on* action).

#### 4. Awareness Of Strengths And Weaknesses

Central to metacognition is a person's capacity to see their own strengths and weaknesses. Only through looking at yourself and making a genuine assessment of your weaknesses can you achieve self-improvement.

One way to start looking at your strengths and weaknesses is to use a SWOT chart.

A [SWOT chart](#) is a chart with four sections:

- **[Strengths](#)**: write down what you perceive to be your strengths as a learner.
- **[Weaknesses](#)**: write down what you perceive to be your weaknesses as a learner.
- **[Opportunities](#)**: identify opportunities you may have to improve your [cognitive skills](#) in the coming weeks or months.
- **[Threats](#)**: identify potential threats that may prevent you from improving your cognitive skills in the coming weeks or months.

#### 5. Awareness Of Learning Styles

Learning styles theories such as Gardner's Multiple Intelligences and [Learning](#)



[Modalities](#) theories argue that different people learn in different ways.

For example, you may feel you are better at learning through images than reading.

Some common learning styles include:

- **Visual:** A visual learner learns best through images, graphics, TV documentaries and graphs. They are good at identifying patterns and matching complementary colours.
- **Auditory:** A visual learner learns best through listening rather than watching or reading. They enjoy being read stories and listening to podcasts.
- **Kinesthetic:** A kinesthetic learner learns best through movement. They like to learn by doing things rather than reading or listening. They are active rather than [passive learners](#).
- **Logical-Mathematical:** People who are logical-mathematical learners are good at using reasoning to find answers. They are good with numbers but may struggle with subjective issues in the [humanities](#).
- **Interpersonal:** An Interpersonal learner loves learning through social interaction. They're good at group work, have high emotional intelligence, and can compromise to get their job done.
- **Intrapersonal:** An intrapersonal learner is someone who likes to mull things over in their own heads. They're happy to learn in silence and isolation and may find working with others to be a distraction (see: [intrapersonal communication skills](#)).



If you are aware of how you learn (i.e. the way your brain processes information!) you may be able to use your strengths and work on your weaknesses more efficiently.

## 6. Mnemonic Aids

Mnemonic aids are strategies you can use to improve your information retention. They involve using rhymes, patterns, and associations to remember.

They work by adding context (additional or surrounding information) to a fact to help you to recall it.

My favorite example of using mnemonic aids is for remembering names.

You might remember a name in one of the following ways:

- **Rhyme:** You meet a singer named Tom. You tell yourself “Tom would sing a song before long.” Now, next time you meet Tom the singer, you might be able to recall your rhyme to remember both his name and profession!
- **Association:** I have a sister named Vanessa. I *a/ways* remember people named Vanessa because my head says “Oh, she has the same name as my sister!” every time I meet a Vanessa.

## 7. Writing Down Your Working

Most people will recall in high school math classes their teacher saying: “I want to see your working so I know how you got to your answer.”

This teacher is ensuring you are employing the right thinking processes and can show others how you went about *thinking about* the task.



When you become an expert at a topic you tend not to think about your thinking. We sometimes call this “unconscious competence”, which is the fourth [stage of learning](#) in the learner competence model.

## 8. Thinking Aloud

Lev Vygotsky (a central figure in the sociocultural [theory of education](#)) argues beginner learners tend to think aloud before learning to think inside their heads.

The benefit of [sociocultural theory](#)'s strategy of thinking aloud is that it makes you really think. You have to talk through what your brain is doing, making those [thinking processes](#) explicit.

Teachers will often ask students to speak out loud about what they're thinking. It not only helps the student be more conscious of their cognitive processes, it also helps the teacher identify areas where the student is going astray.

## 9. Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers, also sometimes called [cognitive tools](#), help us to consciously improve our thinking processes. They assist us in:

- Organizing our thoughts.
- Creating connections between things we know.
- Thinking more deeply about something.
- Visualizing processes and procedures.

Examples of graphic organizers include:



- Mind maps.
- Flow charts.
- Spider diagrams.

The ideal graphic organizer will allow us to spill our thinking out onto a sheet or screen and shuffle and sort our thoughts to help us organize our minds better.

By using a graphic organizer, we are more [effectively thinking](#) about our thinking.

## 10. Regulation Checklists

A regulation checklist can either be task-based or generalized.

A task-based regulation checklist is usually created before a task begins. It will:

- List the thought processes required to succeed in the task.
- List the observable outcomes of higher order thinking linked to the task.
- List the checkpoints during the task where people should pause to reflect on their thinking.

A general regulation checklist provides regulation strategies that can be used across any normal task, such as:

- Reminders to pause and reflect-in-practice at regular intervals.
- Prompts to remind students to think about what strategies they are using and whether they are appropriate for the task.
- Self-questioning prompts to remind students to question their choices.

- Quick charts and questionnaires to help people focus on their developments such as KWL charts.



## 11. Active Reading Strategies

Active reading strategies are strategies that ensure you are concentrating while you read and actually comprehend the information.

Examples of active reading strategies include:

- **Underlining text:** Underline key or important bits of information to highlight their importance in your mind.
- **Using a ruler to read:** place a ruler under the sentence you're reading to help you focus on that line.
- **Scan for the main ideas:** In informational texts, you can scan for the information you need. Pay close attention to subheadings that give you a clue about where you will find the key information.

My favorite approach to active reading is the [reciprocal teaching](#) approach. This approach emphasizes four more strategies:

- **Questioning:** Ask yourself questions or ask your friends questions to check comprehension.
- **Summarizing:** Try to sum up the page you just read in one or two sentences to check for comprehension before moving on.
- **Predicting:** Try to predict how a story will go by looking at the pictures on the cover.

- **Clarifying:** Ask for clarification from friends or a teacher when you don't understand rather than just moving on.



## 12. Active Listening Strategies

Active listening strategies are strategies students use to ensure they are listening attentively.

Some [examples of active listening](#) strategies include:

- Turning your body to directly face the speaker.
- Making eye contact.
- Asking questions.
- Nodding when appropriate.
- Repeating what was said to you.

Teachers can directly teach and model active listening strategies to help students develop these metacognitive skills and internalize them for future use.

## 13. Planning Ahead

When we plan ahead, we often have to think about how we'll go about a task. We might call it our "plan of attack".

Planning ahead involves thinking about what we're going to do in order to complete a task. During your planning phase, you might make decisions such as:



- Deciding what strategies you'll use when your task, competition or activity begins.
- Tossing up a range of different [thinking skills](#) you might use when approaching a task.
- Reminding yourself not to make the same mistakes you made last time.
- Preparing some tools that will help you keep your thinking on track, such as preparing graphic organizers.

## Final Thoughts

When learners “think about their thinking” they are more capable of self-improvement. Metacognitive strategies can be learned, practiced, and made into habits in order to improve learning, studying, and *thinking* skills into the future.

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