

Think About Your Thinking

What to Know

Metacognition is like having a superpower for your brain! It's all about thinking about your own thinking. It means being aware of how you learn, understand, and solve problems. When you use metacognition, you become more aware of what's happening in your mind while you're learning or figuring things out.

Imagine you're learning something new, like solving an unfamiliar math problem or reading a challenging book. Metacognition helps you pay attention to how you're understanding the information. It's like having a little voice inside your head that asks questions like, "Do I understand this? Am I confused about something? What strategies can I use to remember this better?"

When you use metacognition, you become an active thinker and learner. You can think about your thinking in a few different ways.

- **Monitoring.** This means keeping an eye on what's happening in your mind. It's like checking if you understand something or if you're getting confused. You might notice when you're finding something easy or when you need to spend more time on it.
- **Planning.** This is like making a roadmap for your brain. When you have a big task, like studying for a test or completing a project, metacognition helps you break it down into smaller steps. It helps you plan how to approach it and decide which strategies to use.
- **Evaluating.** This means looking back at what you've learned or done. You can ask yourself questions like, "Did I do my best? How could I improve next time?" It's like being your own teacher and giving yourself feedback.

Here are some home and school situations that require metacognition.

- understanding your strengths and weaknesses in academic subjects, athletics, or other extracurricular activities
- becoming aware of how your behavior impacts others
- being able to evaluate how prepared you are for a quiz or test
- following household or classroom rules
- talking about feelings with peers or siblings
- checking homework or in-class assignments for mistakes
- identifying the steps needed to write a paper or complete a household chore

- recognizing consequences for your decisions in advance, such as not finishing your homework

By developing metacognition, you become a better learner. It helps you understand how you learn best, what strategies work for you, and when you might need to ask for help. It's like having a secret power that helps you unlock your full potential!

Remember, metacognition takes practice. The more you use it, the better you'll get at understanding your own thinking. So, next time you're learning something new, try to pay attention to your thinking and use your metacognition superpower.

Here are some strategies to improve your metacognition.

1. Self-evaluate using checklists. Before you begin a chore or task, identify how you will determine successful completion of the task. Create a checklist to determine how effectively the task has been completed. For example, a checklist for evaluating a successfully cleaned bedroom might include items such as:

- I made my bed.
- I put my dirty clothes in the laundry basket.
- I put away my clean laundry.
- I put my papers in my backpack.

Complete your checklist after you finish a task.

2. Try to predict the outcome of situations. Think about different factors and obstacles that affect successful task completion, such as an upcoming science project. Keep track of these predictions in a journal. After the activity is complete, identify reasons for any inaccuracies and note what you got right.

3. Speak your thoughts and problem-solving strategies aloud. For example, you might say, "This reminds me of the time when I tried to do this," or "I need to think about what worked and what didn't work the last time I did this." Self-instructional strategies can help you problem-solve, such as putting a puzzle together, solving a math problem, or brainstorming for a project.

4. Identify and acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses. You can make a list, collage, or voice recording of your strengths and weaknesses. Although you may have weaknesses in some areas, you have many strengths in others. Identifying strengths and weaknesses is important for confidence and self-esteem.

5. Explain to a loved one how to succeed at one of your favorite video or board games. You can report how you think about step-by-step problem-solving

strategies in a game. In many games it's important for players to recognize their current score and how it reflects their performance and capacity within the game. When you can identify errors in game play, it will help you pinpoint strengths and weaknesses.

6. Use video games to help you reflect on strategic thinking. Think about how you figured out what to do to "beat a level," for example. Think about the mistakes you previously made and reflect on what you learned from them. Stepping back and trying to find a new way to "beat a level" is something you can try in many situations at home and at school.

7. Next time you want to do something out of the ordinary, step back, consider what you want, and point out the pros and cons. How can you accomplish what you're looking to do or have? Think about your options and talk about them with an adult.

What to Do

Take some time to reflect on your thinking processes and how you approach learning and problem-solving. Answer the following questions honestly and thoughtfully. There are no right or wrong answers. The goal is to gain self-awareness and develop strategies to develop your metacognition.

How do you currently approach learning new topics or subjects?

Are there any specific strategies you use to understand and remember information?

What do you do when you encounter difficulties or challenges?

What are your current academic or personal goals?

How do you break down big goals into smaller, manageable steps?

Do you regularly review and revise your goals? If not, what will help you start doing so?

How do you know when you understand a concept or topic?

How do you know when you need to spend more time on something?

Do you seek feedback from teachers, parents, or peers? If not, how can you best seek and use feedback?

What strategies or techniques have you found helpful for studying or reviewing material?

Do you use any specific memory techniques, such as visualization or mnemonics, to remember information? If yes, provide an example.

Are there any distractions or habits that interfere with your ability to focus and concentrate? How can you minimize or eliminate these distractions?

How do you approach solving a difficult problem or challenge?

Are there any problem-solving strategies you find helpful?

How do you handle setbacks or failures in problem-solving? What can you do differently in the future?

What are your strengths, and how can you best use these strengths?

What are your areas for improvement (weaknesses)? How can you work on developing these skills?

What steps can you take to become a more independent and self-directed learner?

Action Plan

Based on your answers above, identify at least three actions you can take to enhance your learning and develop metacognitive skills.

1.

2.

3.

How will you hold yourself accountable for implementing these actions?

How will you measure your progress and determine if these actions are effective?

Remember, metacognition is an ongoing process of self-reflection and adjustment. Use this worksheet as a starting point, and regularly revisit and revise your answers as you grow and develop.

Here are some ideas to develop metacognition:

- Online platforms like BrainHQ.com - BrainHQ is an online platform to "work out" your brain. Think of it as a personal gym, where you exercise your memory, attention, brain speed, people skills, intelligence, and navigation instead of your body. Just as your body requires care and exercise, so does your brain.
- "Rock Band" - This game has distinct roles (drummer, guitarist, singer) that allows you to begin to recognize strengths and weaknesses.
- Athletics - Try to predict how fast you can swim a lap of the pool, how high you can jump, or how far you can kick a soccer ball to practice achieving accurate predictions.
- Chess, Checkers, or Connect Four - These types of strategy games allow you to evaluate what kind of approaches were successful in the past and what new approaches you might try when you next play the game.
- Program your cell phone - Set different ring tones and/or pictures for people in your phonebook and discuss with an adult how this could be useful in identifying callers.
- Watch people at the grocery store or in the mall - While observing strangers, describe your perceptions of these people and then discuss how you formed these impressions with an adult (facial expressions, body language, verbal cues, etc.).

Choose one of the above ideas and try it! Write about your experience below.

Did this activity help you “think about your thinking?” Why or why not?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
