POSTER · BUILD IT · METACOGNITION

# Cognition or metacognition? What to listen for

**Cognition** is doing the task: recalling, calculating, reading, writing, answering. **Metacognition** is choosing, watching and changing how the task is done. The tell is what the learner is talking about: the task, or how they are tackling it.

## Doing the task

Cognition. The work itself, and most of what you will hear.

### Giving an answer

A result, with no route to it.

- "The answer is 42."
- "It is a simile, not a metaphor."
- "Seven times eight is fifty-six."

### Recalling a fact

Task content, held in memory.

- "Paris is the capital of France."
- "The Battle of Hastings was in 1066."
- "Photosynthesis happens in the leaves."

### Working through the steps

Doing the procedure, without commenting on it.

- "Times both sides by four, then take away three."
- "The metaphor compares her voice to a bell."
- "Copy the table, then fill in the middle column."

### Asking for the product

Wanting the answer, not a way to it.

- "Can I have the answer?"
- "Is it this one?"
- "Just tell me what to write."

**Your move.** Nothing is wrong here; this is the work. The metacognitive moment is yours to open: "Talk me through how you got there." "How sure are you, and how do you know?" "What will you do first?"

### Too little to tell

A stop or a feeling, not yet a check.

- "I finished." Ask: "How do you know it is right?"
- "I don't get it." Ask: "Show me the last step you were sure of."

## Steering the thinking

Metacognition. Three processes, usually in this order.

### 1 Planning

Before starting: choosing how to tackle it.

- "I'll draw a diagram first, then work out the parts."
- "I'm going to read it twice because it is a hard paragraph."
- "Last time I rushed the reading, so this time I will underline the question."
- "I'll start with the ones I know I can do."

**Say:** "Why that way first?" A plan with a reason is a strategy they can reuse.

### 2 Monitoring

During: watching whether it is working.

- "Wait, that does not look right, let me check the units."
- "Is this the same kind of question as yesterday?"
- "I used the number line because the bar model was not helping."
- "I'm not sure this step is right."

**Say:** "What told you to check?" Make the trigger explicit so they notice it next time.

### 3 Evaluating

After: judging how it went and what to keep.

- "I got 7 out of 10 and the ones I lost were all the two-step ones."
- "The diagram helped; the guessing did not."
- "That took longer because I did not plan it."
- "Next time I will read the question twice."

**Say:** "So what will you do differently?" Send the judgement forward into the next plan.