

What it looks like in practice

Eight routines from teachers on social media.

ROUTINE, AS TEACHERS DESCRIBE IT	WHAT YOU WOULD NOTICE	WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS
Week one is routines Start the new class with timings, transitions and shared expectations. Do not open with a definition of metacognition. “Better learning behaviours. Clear timings and transitions. Strong routines. And genuine joy at break and lunchtime.” @Head_CWhite	The same entry, the same start, every lesson. Joy at break. No poster of the word metacognition on day one.	EEF Toolkit: it can be hard to realise the average impact in practice. Week one is the behaviour the thinking will later sit inside.
The same routine in every class Agree the start across the team so it does not change room by room. Learners meet one pattern, not six. “Imagine how much easier it would be if it wasn't different in each class. For the teachers. For the students. Routines and consistency really help.” @helenrey	A cover teacher can run the start. Learners stop asking how this room works.	One teacher's account of load, not a trial. EEF Rec 2, Nov 2025 edition: strategies are best taught on specific content, but the classroom conditions have to be stable first.

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Four decision lines, in the subject Narrate reusable decisions on a real task: what I notice, which knowledge is relevant, what I do first, how I will check. Use subject words, not the word metacognition. “What do I notice? Which knowledge is relevant? What should I do first? How will I check whether this works?” @dnleslie	The teacher saying why before what. Learners later using the same four lines on this task.	EEF Rec 3, Nov 2025: model your own thinking. Toolkit key finding 3 (May 2025 update): teachers promote metacognition by modelling thinking aloud on curriculum tasks.
Independence last Do not begin the fortnight with a blank journal or a learning pit. Activate prior knowledge, model, check, then give a short independent try. “Independence is the destination of instruction, not necessarily the best place to begin it.” @dnleslie	A modelled first attempt before anyone is left alone. No week-one independent learning hour.	Kettlewell, 28 Apr 2026: learners do not become self-sufficient by being given lots of tasks to work on alone. The seven-step model is explicit modelling, then a shift of responsibility.

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Plan with the seven-step model Use the EEF seven-step as the planning spine: prior knowledge, strategy, model, check, guided practice, independent practice, structured reflection. It is a scaffold, not a lesson plan. “Whatever your phase, the 7-step model from the recently updated Metacognition and Self-regulation Guidance Report offer a great structure for your planning.” @HuntResearchSch	Prior knowledge before the model. A check before guided practice. Reflection that feeds the next similar task.	EEF seven-step practitioner tool v2.0.0 (via Kettlewell, 28 Apr 2026): activating prior knowledge through to structured reflection. Step 4 in the 2025 tool is check understanding of the strategy, not memorisation. Rec 2 says the same sequence can run across a lesson or a series of lessons.
US variant: how learning happens In US schools, spend the first couple of days on human cognitive architecture, then a concrete demo of long-term memory, then retrieval. Name it as the US start. Do not blend it with the UK week-one routines row. “Yes, I spend the first couple of days of the school year teaching students the basics of human cognitive architecture.” @SoLInTheWild	A two-day crash course before the first content unit. Working memory and retrieval in teacher language, not a poster of the word metacognition.	A US classroom claim, not a UK trial. UK science teachers in the same window argued against a discrete science-of-learning unit. Toolkit key finding 2: teach the strategies on usual curriculum content, not as thinking-skills lessons. The disagreement is the finding.

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US variant: talk is expected In US schools, spend the first three weeks making conversation and backing up answers the classroom norm. UK equivalent: the same stems, in this subject, from day one of the model. "Instilling classroom norms the first 3 weeks of school and making sure conversation and sharing ideas is expected." @Mrs_Ritch	Turn and talk that is required, not optional. Learners justifying a step, not only giving an answer.	Toolkit key finding 5: promoting reasoning and debate helps because it makes thinking public. EEF Rec 2 still wants that talk on this week's work, not as a generic oracy unit.
US variant: do not wait In US schools, talk retrieval and storage strength from the first days, not after the first assessment. In UK schools, put the four decision lines on a subject task in week one, not in a later study-skills slot. "New school year? Don't wait to start talking with your students about effective learning strategies." @effortfuleduktr	Retrieval language in week one. No "we will cover how to learn in October".	Toolkit: explicitly teaching strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate specific aspects of learning can be effective, and they should sit in usual curriculum content. This row is when to start, not a new strategy list.

The Toolkit plus eight months figure is a mean across programmes, not a first-fortnight result, so it stays off this table.