

# Cognitive Coaching

A number of studies have shown that children who are having difficulty in school do not think “strategically;” They may go through the motions when completing their schoolwork, but what’s interfering with their success in school is their lack of experience and practice using key thinking processes. Researchers have demonstrated clearly that children can acquire these thinking processes, if they receive what is referred to as “cognitive coaching”.

*Cognitive coaching* refers to an approach to tutoring which integrates the teaching of thinking processes into the teaching of subject matter (such as history, literature, civics, math, science). A cognitive coach is a tutor who *models, demonstrates, thinks aloud, prompts, probes, scaffolds and supports a child’s attempts to practice these key-thinking processes*. An effective cognitive coach shows a child “how to learn” independently using some of the following methods:

1. **Generating questions** as you read and study (ask “what if” questions)
2. Developing **awareness of different types of levels of questions**; asking questions a test asks
3. **Predicting** upcoming events in text; making a hypothesis about the reading
4. **Systematically searching for evidence to support** or reject your prediction
5. Clarifying parts of the text that are unclear (**checking for understanding**)
6. Locating the **main idea**; connecting what you’re studying to a larger whole or underlying theme
7. Distinguishing main ideas and supporting details (breakdown **ideas into components** and find thesis statement)
8. **Comparing and contrasting** (juxtaposing competing ideas)
9. **Classifying** and categorizing
10. Building **mental imagery** of what is being read
11. Developing a “mental map” of what is being read by asking **who, what, when, why, and how** (mental maps are sometimes called “story maps”); visualizing images
12. **Sequencing** events.
13. **Recognizing organizational patterns** in text, such as cause-effect, chronological, and problem-solving
14. Recognizing **common story patterns** such as “once upon a time” (often called story grammars)
15. Activating relevant schema or **background knowledge**
16. Explicitly **connecting prior background knowledge (schema) with new knowledge** by relating new information to a familiar context
17. **Determining if new, incoming information is compatible or incompatible** with what you already know
18. Establishing “understanding anchors” by **giving examples and non-examples**
19. As you read and study putting effort into **creating metaphors and analogies**
20. **Summarizing in your own mind** what you understand and what you don’t understand
21. Paraphrasing in your own words; engaging a verbal rehearsal; talking out loud to reinforce memory and understanding (**repetitive practice**)
22. Using common **memory techniques** such as acronyms and acrostics
23. **Organizing what you have learned into a form which is meaningful to you**, such as an outline, or a spider web, or a Venn diagram (draw diagrams, use different colors)
24. **Drawing conclusions, inferences and interpretations** which are not explicitly stated in the reading trying to apply and use new information in new situations (elaborating on possibilities)
25. Continually monitoring yourself during the entire learning process to see if you are staying on task and to see if things are making sense this **self-monitoring** activity is sometimes called “metacognitive awareness”