

A definition of Metacognition

Metacognition is often referred to as thinking about thinking. It is a process of self-reflection on the way you have learnt knowledge and/or used knowledge. It is also a process of considering how you might apply knowledge from one situation to another.

Practical Example

Let's think about this with a practical example. Take the game Odd places to start

This is an improvisation-based game. Working in pairs, students number themselves 1 and 2. The teacher then states in what positions the two students stand. For example, student 1 sits on the floor, with the legs and arms crossed and looking to the ground with a sad face. Student 2 then stands behind them, with their right arm pointing down towards them. The students then improvise a scene spontaneously, based on the way they are standing.

It is a fun improvisation game that helps students get creative, active and engaged.

Enjoy the game but know that there is more to get out of it once the game has finished. When they have completed it, ask the students to get all meta. Ask them to think about what factual knowledge (key terminology) they had to draw on to play the game. Ask them how they applied that factual knowledge to achieve the ends they wanted to achieve. Ask them if they completed the task to the best of their ability. Ask them what stopped them from doing it better. Ask them what procedural knowledge (performance skills, creativity, group work) they drew on. Ask them how they used this procedural knowledge to create the performance.

Get them to reflect on what knowledge they had to draw on from their memories. Ask them to reflect on how they applied that knowledge to create a performance.

Ask them to speculate on how they will use this information again, if called to do so. For example, in the next activity, the focus of the lesson or the rehearsal they are about to undertake.

Each purpose for each drama game you choose must link to the focus of the lesson. Through metacognition, we draw out learning from the game and apply to the focus of the lesson.

Make sure that you've got a huge range of drama games that you can draw from. This way, each game is played for specific purpose related to the focus of the lesson.

Also be pedantic on the role of the metacognition. You may imply that by playing the game you are encouraging an ensemble and group mindset. But don't rely on that for every student in the room to understand it. Make it clear to them!

Questions to ask your students

- What knowledge did they have to draw on from their memories in order to complete the task?
- How did they apply that knowledge to create a performance?
- If asked to do this again, how would you do it differently? What would you do the same?
- What stopped you from doing it really well?