



## Metacognition

Metacognition means literally cognition about cognition, or thinking about thinking. All good thinkers think about their thinking. They can stand back from their thinking and reflect upon it, identifying where they can improve it by making it more consistent, creative and flexible.

At the end of each lesson or period of study stand back from your thinking to reflect on not just what you have learnt, but about the nature of your own thinking. The sorts of questions we all need to ask ourselves are those like the following.

- 1 Are you too restricted in the range of questions you ask when you are tackling a problem? Do you fear appearing to be a fool, if you were to ask the really naïve question that nobody else is willing to ask?
- 2 When you put forward an idea, do you have a tendency to want to defend it at all costs, unwilling to concede any weakness? Do you find it difficult to play devil's advocate?
- 3 Are you one of those people who tend not to finish things? When you come across a problem, do you have a tendency to give up too easily, rather than work at it until you have finished it?
- 4 Even though at times it seems the work is not going well, and you can't see how and when you will finish it, are you able to strengthen your resolve by telling yourself that things will get better or do you find at such times that it is difficult motivate yourself?

By asking these sorts of questions, you can develop a better understanding of your weaknesses and strengths. In this way you become better at self-monitoring your thinking processes, learning more about your own style of thinking and how you can improve it. The first step in becoming a better thinker is to learn more about how you think, so that you can practise and strengthen your skills in those areas that are weak. Our abilities to think are no different from our physical abilities in this respect: in both cases we need to exercise regularly and keep good records of our progress.