

COMPANION WORKBOOK

BEYOND *the* PANIC

Screen Time, EdTech, AI and
the Future of Education



TOOL 02 · FOR STUDENTS

THE COGNITIVE OFFLOADING GUIDE

Essential Question: What did the tool do to my thinking?

PAIRS WITH CHAPTER 4 · OFFLOADING HAS ALWAYS BEEN PROGRESS

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From the companion workbook to Beyond the Panic: Screen Time, EdTech, AI and the Future of Education. Free to print and share for classroom and non-commercial educational use with this notice intact.

STUDENT GUIDE

THE COGNITIVE OFFLOADING GUIDE

The critical question: What did the tool do to my thinking?

↑ AMPLIFIED

My thinking got bigger

You did the thinking. The tool made it louder, faster, or more visible than you could have managed alone. Your voice is still recognizably yours.

YOU NOTICE

- You could explain the output without the tool
- The work reflects decisions you made
- You'd reach similar conclusions without it, just slower

e.g. Using a calculator to check algebra you worked out first. Using AI to format an argument you've already constructed.

⊕ AUGMENTED

The tool added what I couldn't

The tool contributed something you couldn't have produced independently. But you directed it, evaluated what it gave you, and integrated it into your own reasoning. Genuine collaboration.

YOU NOTICE

- You made real decisions about what to keep and cut
- You can identify where the tool was wrong
- You understand the output better than before you started

e.g. Using AI to surface research you'd never have found, then building your own argument from it. Using a thesaurus to find the exact word you knew you needed.

↓ DIMINISHED

I let it do thinking I should have done

The tool did cognitive work you were capable of doing and building yourself. You used it to skip the friction that was developing your skill. You are less capable because of this session.

YOU NOTICE

- You couldn't reconstruct the work without the tool
- You accepted the output without evaluating it
- You feel vaguely aware you took a shortcut

e.g. Using a calculator before developing number sense. Using AI to draft an argument before you've formed a position. Using spell-check instead of learning to spell.

× REPLACED

I didn't think. It thought.

You submitted the tool's output as your own. There is no you in the product. You are not more capable than before you started. You may be less capable, because the act of not-thinking is also practice.

YOU NOTICE

- You couldn't defend or explain the output
- You made no decisions about the content
- You feel uncomfortable when asked about it

e.g. Copying an AI essay and submitting it. Copying search results without reading them. Asking someone else to solve your problem and presenting their solution as insight.

NOTE Amplified and Augmented are both legitimate. Diminished is worth noticing. Replaced is the failure mode, not because of the tool, but because of what you chose not to do with your mind.