

COMPANION WORKBOOK

BEYOND *the* PANIC

Screen Time, EdTech, AI and
the Future of Education



TOOL 03 · FOR STUDENTS

THE THREE-CHECKPOINT WORKFLOW

Essential Question: How do I use a tool without letting it do the thinking I need to grow?

PAIRS WITH CHAPTER 4 · OFFLOADING HAS ALWAYS BEEN PROGRESS

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STUDENT WORKFLOW

THE THREE-CHECKPOINT WORKFLOW

Three moments to check what a tool is doing to your thinking: before, during, and after.

CHECKPOINT 1 · BEFORE YOU USE THE TOOL

1. What is the actual thinking task? What do I need to figure out, decide, or produce?
2. What part of this am I capable of doing myself, even if it's slower or harder?
3. Am I reaching for the tool because it will help me think better, or because it will let me think less?

→ *Your answers here set your intention. Use the routing table below.*

IF YOU ANSWERED...	YOUR TARGET ZONE	WHAT TO DO NEXT
<i>I know what I need to figure out and the tool will accelerate it.</i>	↑ AMPLIFIED	Good. Use the tool. Hold your own position throughout. Compare the output to your own thinking.
<i>The tool can reach something I genuinely can't, but I'll evaluate everything it gives me.</i>	⊕ AUGMENTED	Good. Define your evaluation criteria before you look at the output. What would make it wrong?
<i>I'm not sure I understand the task well enough to know what I need.</i>	↓ DIMINISHED RISK	Pause. Spend 5 minutes attempting the task alone first. Even a rough attempt builds the schema you need to use the tool well.
<i>I want the tool to just handle it so I can move on.</i>	✕ REPLACED RISK	Stop. Ask why. Is the task genuinely beyond you, or just uncomfortable? Discomfort is often the signal that the work matters.

CHECKPOINT 2 · WHILE YOU ARE USING THE TOOL

1. Can I explain, in my own words, what the tool just produced and why it's right or wrong?
2. Am I making decisions about what to keep, change, or reject, or am I accepting everything?
3. If the tool gave me something I didn't expect, did I evaluate it or did I just use it?

→ *The 'during' checkpoint is your real-time calibration. If any answer is 'no,' pause and engage before continuing.*

IF YOU NOTICED...	CURRENT ZONE	MOVE TO DO THIS
<i>I'm pushing back on the output, revising it, making it mine.</i>	↑ AMPLIFIED / AUGMENTED	Stay here. This friction is the learning. The discomfort of evaluating is the point.
<i>I disagree with the output but can't articulate why.</i>	⊕ AUGMENTED EDGE	Trust the instinct. Write down your objection first, then go back to the tool with a better question.
<i>I've stopped reading carefully and I'm just accepting.</i>	↓ DIMINISHED	Stop scrolling. Close the tool. Write one sentence summarizing what you've learned so far in your own words. Then re-engage.
<i>I've been using the output without any evaluation at all.</i>	✕ REPLACED	Hard stop. Delete what you copied. Start with a 5-minute freewrite of your own thinking. Use the tool again only after you have a position of your own to test.

CHECKPOINT 3 · AFTER YOU FINISH

1. Could I explain the core of what I produced to someone who hasn't seen the tool's output?
2. Did my thinking change because of this session, and can I describe how?
3. Am I more capable of doing this kind of task now than I was before I started?

→ If you answer 'no' to question 3, you've identified a pattern to change. Use the Cognitive Offloading Reflection Log at the end of this guide.

IF YOU CAN SAY...	FINAL ZONE	WHAT THIS MEANS
<i>I could teach this to someone else without the tool.</i>	↑ AMPLIFIED	The tool extended your thinking. This is the target state. Notice what you did that made it work.
<i>I understand this more deeply than when I started, even though I couldn't have done it alone.</i>	⊕ AUGMENTED	Genuine collaboration happened. Note what you evaluated and how. This is a skill you're building.
<i>I finished the task but I'm not sure I could do it again independently.</i>	↓ DIMINISHED	Useful data. Next time: attempt the task for 10 minutes before opening the tool. The attempt builds the schema.
<i>I cannot explain the product. I just have something to submit.</i>	✕ REPLACED	The work isn't yours. Before submitting, write one paragraph in your own voice describing your actual thinking on this topic. That paragraph may be more valuable than what you're about to hand in.

COGNITIVE OFFLOADING REFLECTION LOG

Use this during or after any session with a cognitive tool. One log per session. Keep a stack.

DATE

TOOL USED

TASK / SUBJECT

BEFORE *What was your intention going in?*

What thinking task did you need to complete? (In one sentence)

What part of this were you capable of doing yourself?

Why were you using this tool? (Be honest)

DURING *What actually happened to your thinking?*

Describe one moment where you pushed back on, revised, or rejected what the tool gave you.

Describe one moment where you accepted output without fully evaluating it. (If none, write 'none.')

ZONE *Which zone did you land in? Circle one.*

↑ AMPLIFIED

⊕ AUGMENTED

↓ DIMINISHED

× REPLACED

Evidence for your zone choice: what specifically tells you this is where you landed?

AFTER *What did this session build or cost?*

What can you explain or do now that you couldn't before this session?

What would you do differently if you were going to do this task again tomorrow?

Next time I use this tool for this kind of task, I will...