



OMERAD Teaching Tip: Using a Think Aloud

A Think Aloud is a teaching strategy you can use to model a thought process to your students. In a Think Aloud, you invite students to “eavesdrop” on your thinking. You could use a Think Aloud to model your thought process when you are inserting a nasogastric tube, interpreting a lab report, or writing a health record. You narrate the steps you follow as you think aloud about a procedure you are teaching them to use. At the end, you ask students to summarize *what* steps you followed and *why* these steps are important.

How Can I Use a Think Aloud?

Step 1: Identify a thought process to model.

To plan for a Think Aloud, brainstorm the steps of your own thought process to complete a task. For example, one doctor shares his Think Aloud in this way for passing a tube into a trachea. First, he uses a cross finger technique to open the mouth. Next, he inserts a blade on the right to gain control of tongue, and so on. All of these steps must be done in a certain order to optimize your chance at a first time pass.

Step 2: Invite students to “eavesdrop” on your thinking.

Before you model the Think Aloud for your students, you should explain to them that they will be eavesdropping on your thinking. Tell students that after your Think Aloud, they will be asked to identify what steps you followed and why these steps were important.

Step 3: Narrate your thought process for your students.

During the Think Aloud, describe the context where this thought process can be used. Then walk your students through your thought process by narrating the steps involved. You can also share any experiences or challenges you have faced in applying the process you are modeling through the Think Aloud.

Step 4: Ask students to summarize the what and why of the Think Aloud.

After the Think Aloud, invite your students to summarize *what* steps you followed and *why* these steps were important.

Additional Resources

Delany, C., & Golding, C. (2014). Teaching clinical reasoning by making thinking visible: an action research project with allied health clinical educators. *BMC Medical Education*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6920-14-20>

Metacognition & Think-alouds. (n.d.). Retrieved February 13, 2018, from <http://teaching-readingcomprehension.weebly.com/metacognition--think-alouds.html>

Pinnock, R., Young, L., Spence, F., Henning, M., & Hazell, W. (2015). Can Think Aloud Be Used to Teach and Assess Clinical Reasoning in Graduate Medical Education? *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 7(3), 334–337. <https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-14-00601.1>