

## Review pertinent subskills

All skills, processes, or strategies are composed of sets of subskills, some of which are prerequisite, meaning students must have an effective working knowledge of the subskill in order to readily learn the new skill. If the students cannot perform the requisite skills both accurately and fluently, learning more advanced skills that require this background knowledge will ALWAYS be significantly impaired.

Some students may possess an effective working knowledge of the prerequisite skills of the strategy you are teaching, but still require help understanding connections between existing skills and performing the new strategy. See [Assess & Activate Background Knowledge](#).

### Effective Alternative

When teaching new strategies, carefully consider which pertinent previously learned skills you might need to review. When reviewing the material, avoid focusing on your brightest students, as their responses may cause the mistaken impression that the rest of the class also knows the prerequisite skills as well as they do.

If you find students do not know the prerequisite skills as well as they should, try to avoid the temptation to teach the new strategy anyway. Students' subsequent learning of the new strategy will be considerably more efficient and effective if you take the time to review and, if necessary, reteach the prerequisite skills.

### Specific Tips

Effective strategy instruction involves both teaching HOW to perform the strategy (how to orchestrate the skills and processes associated with using the strategy) and WHAT the strategy is about (what the strategy is designed to do, where it can be used, why it works). Thus, you will need to assess and review as needed, critical subskills and knowledge in both areas.

### Reviewing prerequisite skills...

1. Task-analyze the strategy you are teaching to identify the **overt** and **covert** behaviors required of students to perform the strategy. *Overt* skills are observable and produce products that can be assessed. PLAN example. *Covert* skills are thought processes such as decisions that are made or use of self-speech.
2. Task-analyze the overt process associated with performing the strategy. Make a list of the specific skills or knowledge that are involved in performing the process.
3. Some of the skills on your list can be learned simultaneously as students learn to perform the new strategy, but others cannot. Those that cannot are considered prerequisite and thus should be thoroughly reviewed and retaught *before* beginning instruction in the new strategy. Thus, differentiate the items on the list to indicate those that should be thoroughly reviewed and retaught if needed. PLAN strategy example
4. Task-analyze the covert processes involved in performing the strategy. Identify key decisions students will have to make when performing the strategy, and then identify the knowledge students must have to make these decisions effectively.
5. Use review techniques that are student-action oriented. That is, reviews of requisite skills should require students to perform the skills in question. Simply modeling the requisite skills for students as a review, in lieu of having students perform them, is not nearly as effective. Therefore, design activities that require students to perform the critical overt and covert processes, and reteach them as needed. PLAN strategy example

### Reviewing knowledge about the strategy

Remember that the real measure of our effectiveness as teachers is **NOT** whether students can perform a strategy correctly, but whether they **USE** the strategy to complete tasks or solve problems in the "real" world. A common mistake we tend to make is to assume that if students can perform a skill or strategy *somewhat* accurately and fluently, they have learned it. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Instruction must include developing in students a knowledge base about the strategy (not just how to perform it). This knowledge base includes awareness of **WHAT** the strategy is designed to do, **WHEN** and **WHERE** it should be used, **HOW** the strategy works, and **WHY** use of the strategy will help students be more successful. Thus, you

should frequently review with students this information in a manner that requires students to think and make active responses. Reviews of knowledge about the strategy should require students to generate descriptions of the strategy and pertinent information about its use (e.g., explain the gist of the strategy, identify from a list of features those that are *always*, *sometimes*, and *never* associated with using the strategy, provide an example or nonexample of when it should be used, create metaphor or simile of the strategy, etc.).

PLAN strategy example

Tactics for beginning a strategy lesson

Differentiating HOW to teach