Comprehension Monitoring Strategies – Secondary Schools

Universal and Targeted Approaches

What is comprehension monitoring?

Comprehension monitoring strategies encourage young people to identify **how well they have understood** information or instructions, **identify the reason why they have not understood** and **use strategies to seek clarification**.

Useful strategies:

- **Understanding Check-In's**

The first step in comprehension monitoring is being able to identify and express how well you have understood.
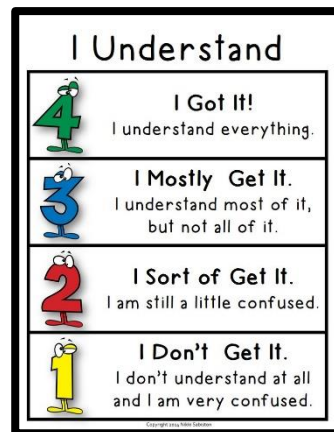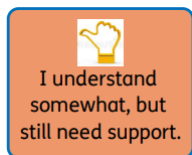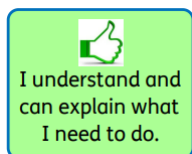
You can use Understanding Check-In's in several ways:
- Add traffic light check-in's to staff lanyards
- Add a visual check-in chart to planners or subject books
- Display check-in's on desks and encourage students to use these as your circulate the classroom
- Encourage use of gestures to communicate understanding [e.g. thumbs up, in the middle or down]

Things to consider:
- Try to encourage all students to check-in, [e.g. have check-in's on every desk] rather than singling out students with check-in's on their desk only
- Remember that students need to feel confident and safe expressing that they haven't understood, and for that to happen we need to build a social-emotional environment where it is viewed as positive to ask for help
- Model using the check-in's

- **Colour-coding steps and success criteria**

For multi-step tasks or tasks with multiple success criteria, encourage students to 'Traffic Light' or RAG rate steps before they begin tasks. You can also encourage them to underline words that they are not sure the meaning of.

Here is an example:

Analyse how Alduous Huxley establishes a clear mood in the poem 'Panic'.

Remember that your paragraph should include:

- A topic sentence that outlines what mood is created in the poem.
- An explanation of how that mood is created.
- An example showing this mood.
- Analysis of your chosen example (the effect language has on the audience).
- A second example from the text reflecting the mood you have chosen.
- Analysis of your second example (the effect language has on the audience).
- A linking statement summarising how Huxley uses language to set a mood.

Here is another example:

Plotting Co-ordinates

Step 1: Identify the point in question, (x,y).

Step 2: Determine its x-coordinate, which will be the horizontal distance from the origin.

Step 3: Determine its y-coordinate, which will be the vertical distance from the origin.

Step 4: Plot or label the point (depending on what the question is asking).

You can use this strategy in several ways:
- Provide printed steps or success criteria or ask students to write them in books before colour-coding the steps to evaluate their understanding.
- Circulate the class or check-in with Targeted Pupils and use the colour-coding to support you to scaffold their understanding.
- This is a great strategy for when homework tasks are set, to check understanding as students record homework in their planners.

Things to consider:

- This takes practice so it would be a good idea to model this with Targeted students in a small group. An adult can use examples from lessons and model how to colour-code understanding / practice with example tasks and success criteria.
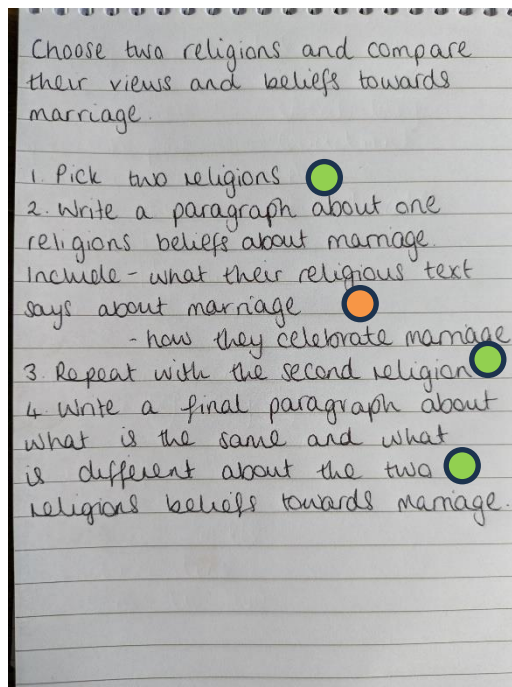
- **Repeating back instructions**

This can simply involve asking the student if they can explain what they need to do first, next, then.

Can you explain what we need to do:
First…
Next…
Then…

You can also encourage pupils to write down the steps they need to take either using a Task Planner template or a step-by-step list in their books.

Task Management Board

I am learning to..   What equipment do I need?

1 Example step 🟢
2 Example step 🟠
3
4
5

I will be finished when.. ⭕

Choose two religions and compare their views and beliefs towards marriage.

1. Pick two religions 🟢
2. Write a paragraph about one religions beliefs about marriage. Include – what their religious text says about marriage 🟠
   – how they celebrate marriage 🟢
3. Repeat with the second religion
4. Write a final paragraph about what is the same and what is different about the two religions beliefs towards marriage. 🟢

Here we have added a RAG or traffic light dot next to each step to identify confidence level with the step.

Ways to use this strategy:
- A teacher or other educator can circulate / approach Targeted students, check they have included all of the steps they need to take [and in the correct sequence] and support them with any 'Amber' or 'Red' areas.

Things to Consider:

- This takes practice so it would be a good idea to model this with Targeted students.
- Task Planners can be used in a more scaffolded way with pupils to encourage them to 'break down' tasks – in this example, it is used for the student to record the steps they need to take independently.

- **Saying When I Don't Understand**

'Sayin When I Don't Understand' prompts encourage students to consider <u>why</u> there has been a communication breakdown and ask for clarification.
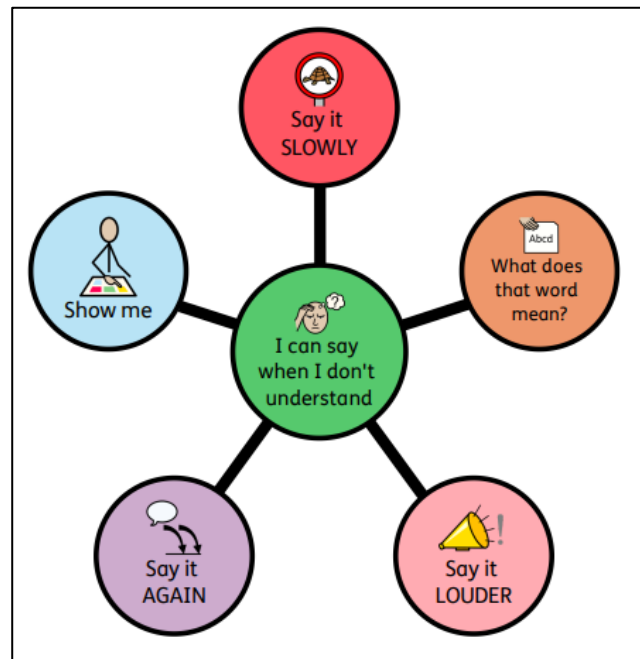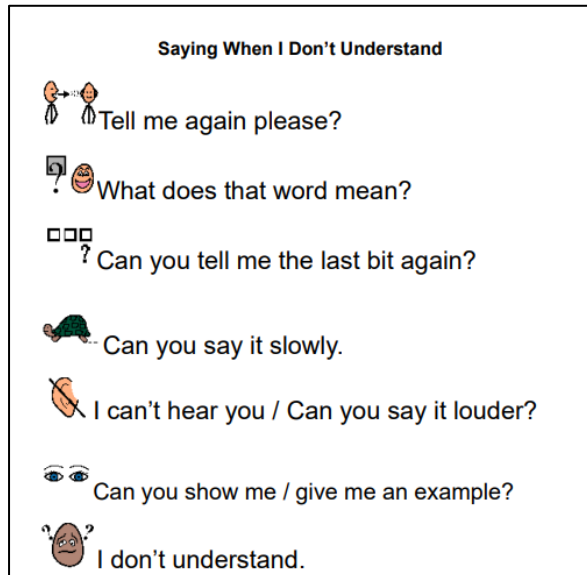
Things to consider:

- Students will need to be taught how to use these visual prompts. You could introduce them as a whole class or in a Targeted group / 1:1. You can introduce them by playing games in which you deliberately make an instruction tricky to understand and the students are required to find the most appropriate way to ask for clarification, e.g. 'Say it louder,' 'What does that word mean?' You can download a game from our website.
- Try to find a way for students to use these visuals discretely e.g. added to their planners, or even better display them in the classroom for the whole class to use or add them to every desk / student planner.

Remember:

- Identifying when we haven't understood and developing the strategies and confidence to ask for clarification are an important skill to learn and develop.
- Building a social-emotional environment where asking for help is encouraged is essential to these strategies being effective.

You can download accompanying resources from our website: