

Follow the thinking

Time: 20–30 minutes **Age:** Adaptable for different age groups **Group size:** Pairs or small groups

Learning goal: Help students identify the choices, checks, and revisions that make an AI-supported response a learning process.

Before the activity

Choose a short task linked to your subject:

Explain why a historical event happened.

Solve a mathematical problem and explain the method.

Interpret the behaviour of a character in a story.

Suggest possible solutions to an environmental problem.

Prepare a simple “thinking trail” showing how a fictional student completed the task (e.g., causes of the French Revolution) using 5–6 short cards:

1. FIRST IDEA

“I think the main cause was economic inequality.”

2. QUESTION ASKED TO AI

“What were the main causes of the French Revolution?”

3. AI SUGGESTION

“The causes included social inequality, financial crisis, food shortages, and Enlightenment ideas.”

4. STUDENT REACTION

“I had not considered food shortages. I want to check how important they were.”

5. CHECK OR DISCUSSION

“The textbook shows that bread prices rose sharply before the Revolution.”

6. FINAL DECISION

“I will argue that economic problems became more serious because of social inequality and food shortages.”

Print the cards, display them on screen, or write them on separate pieces of paper.

1 Reconstruct the trail

Give each pair or group the cards in a mixed order and ask them to arrange them in the order they think the learning process took place. They should be ready to explain:

- Why did you choose this order?
- Which card shows the student’s first understanding?
- Where does the student’s thinking begin to change?
- Which step connects the new information to the final answer?

There may be more than one reasonable order. The purpose is not to reconstruct the teacher’s exact sequence, but to discuss how ideas develop.

2 Find the evidence of thinking

Once the cards are arranged, ask: *Where can you see evidence that the student is thinking, rather than simply copying an answer?*

Invite students to point to specific moments, such as:

- The student notices something they had not considered.
- They decide that a claim needs to be checked or use another source.
- They connect two different ideas or reject, adapt, or expand part of the AI response.
- Their final answer is different from both their first idea and the original AI suggestion.

Encourage evidence from cards: "We think the learning becomes visible here because the student does not immediately accept the AI response. They decide to check one part of it."

Students are looking for moments in which the learner made an active decision rather than just identifying whether AI was involved.

3 Identify the missing step

Before giving cards to groups, remove one (e.g., checking the textbook) and ask what seems to be missing and whether the student can move directly from AI response to final answer.

Groups write their own missing card, suggesting actions like:

- Checking another source or asking a follow-up question;
- Discussing the idea with a classmate or asking the teacher for clarification;
- Explaining the idea without looking at the AI response.

Comparing cards created across groups shows that there is no single fixed learning process.

4 Create a new thinking trail

Give each group a new question and ask them to create a short trail showing how a student could use AI without handing over the whole thinking process. Their trail should include a first idea, one use of AI, a moment of checking, a decision, a final response, and a short reflection.

Reflect together

End the activity with a short discussion:

- *Which step would be easiest to leave out?*
- *What might happen if the student accepted the first AI response immediately?*
- *Which strategies helped the student stay in control of the task?*
- *How could you show a similar thinking trail in your own work?*

SUMMARY & IMPACT

The purpose of *Follow the thinking* is to help students recognise that learning involves choices: asking, checking, comparing, discussing, revising, and deciding. When these choices become visible, teachers can better understand what students are learning. When students learn to trace their own steps, they move from passive consumers of technology to confident, independent thinkers.