

8 Strategies to Check Understanding

Signals. Create (with children) a set of hand signals that they can use to indicate levels of understanding. Have one that means “I get it and can explain it”, another that indicates “I’m not sure and doubt I can explain it”, and a third that says “I don’t understand it yet”. Ask those who indicate understanding to share in their own words what something means, which may help others understand better.

Graphics. Ask children to draw a visual map or illustration of a spiritual concept. If you’re talking about ‘social responsibility’, invite them to depict ways of living out this concept or show how different understandings of the concept overlap with a VEN diagram.

Binaries. Also known as true/false or agree/disagree statements, binaries help children keep straight various arguments for moral behavior. You might ask, “Agree/Disagree: recycling plastic bottles is better for the planet than using a reusable water bottle” and then have children explain how their position aligns with environmental policies.

Troubleshooting. State a misconception about spirituality, such as “You can only meditate by sitting very still and quiet.” Then ask children to identify the mistake in the claim and correct it using information from your family or group discussion of meditation practices.

Summaries. Invite children to summarize a new concept in a few words, such as a 280 character tweet, a one-minute podcast or a two-minute vlog. Provide them with a prompt such as “three ways that mindfulness helps keep a person grounded are...”.

Applications. Ask children to find or share an example of a spiritual concept in action. It might be a news report showing how concern for the common good is balanced with individual rights, or a story from their experience about stepping up rather than being a bystander.

Analogies. Prompt students to use the formula “X is like Y because...” to explain a spiritual concept. One example: *Attentiveness* is like a *sloth* because *it takes time and is slow to move on to another activity*.

Teaching. With older children, encourage them to teach a spiritual concept or practice to a younger sibling or friend. They might share not only why kindness is a good choice but also specific ways to show kindness to a friend..