

Study Skills Workshop: Critical Thinking



[Career Services](#)/[Academic Advising](#), Student Life

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Place in Email Subject Line: 'Study Skills'

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What is critical thinking?

- thorough thinking; the willingness to change our opinion

Critical thinking means...

- sorting out conflicting claims; weighing the evidence for them; letting go of personal biases; arriving at reasonable views; being willing to change views

Critical thinking can be...

- Convergent thinking: Narrowing-down from many possible viewpoints
- Divergent (or creative) thinking: Generating as many possible options as you can
- Divergent thinking provides a basis for convergent thinking.

Becoming a Critical Thinker

- Be willing to say “I don’t know”
- Practice tolerance
- Watch for hot spots
- Understand before criticizing
- Accept your changing perspectives

Becoming a Critical Thinker

- Define your terms
- Consider the source
- Seek out alternative views
- Ask questions
- Look for at least three answers
- Combine perspectives

Assumptions:

- Unconscious
- Generalizations
- Unsupported personal opinions
- Prejudice thrives on assumptions; assertions & opinions flow from our assumptions: know what your assumptions are.

Common Mistakes in Logic:

- Jumping to conclusions
- Attacking the person
- Appealing to an “authority”
- Pointing to a false cause
- Thinking in “all-or-nothing” terms
- Basing arguments on emotion

Adapted from: Becoming a Master Student. D Ellis. Houghton Mifflin. 2006

Critical Thinking: Attitudes

Truth-seeking: following an idea even though it questions your assumptions or previously held views about something

Open-minded: being interested in others views, open to changing yours, treating others' views with respect

Analytical: taking a stand on an issue, commitment to take action, faith in your own argument/conclusion

Systematic: desire to hear evidence to support each viewpoint

Self-confident: even if confused the first time, not giving up – belief in ability to understand

Inquisitive: desire to learn more

Mature: ability to suspend judgment

Critical Thinking: Questions

1. What is the author's **fundamental purpose**?
E.g. to inform, persuade, analyze.....
2. What is the **key question** the author is trying to answer?
3. What **information** does the author use to answer his/her question(s)?
4. What is the most **basic concept** in the author's question?
5. What **assumptions** is the author using in his/her reasoning?
6. What is the **author's point of view** with respect to the issue?
7. What are the author's most fundamental **inferences or conclusions**?
8. What are the **implications** of the author's reasoning (if she/he is correct)?

Adapted from: The Critical Thinking Community

Critical Thinking: Questions

1. What are the **issue** and the **conclusion**?
 - a. Descriptive issues are those that raise question about the accuracy of descriptions of the past, present, or future.
 - b. Prescriptive questions are those that raise questions about what we should do or what is right or wrong, good or bad.
2. What are the reasons?
3. What words or phrased are ambiguous?
4. What are the value conflicts and assumptions?
5. What are the descriptive assumptions?
6. Are there any fallacies in the reasoning?
7. How good is the evidence: intuition, personal experience, testimonials, and appeals to authority?
8. How good is the evidence: personal observation, research studies, case examples, and analogies?
9. Are there rival causes?
10. Are the statistics deceptive?
11. What significant information is omitted?
12. What reasonable conclusions are possible?

Adapted from: Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking, N Browne and S Keeley. Pearson Prentice Hall. 2007

Checkout [UBC Learning Commons](#) for some useful tips and exercises