

# Critical thinking essay sample



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## CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is a rational and intentional cognitive skill oriented to take a decision or solve a problem. We use critical thinking skills in any area of our lives – professional, as citizen, love or friendship. Its key characteristics are rationality, reflection and evaluation (Tenreiro-Vieira and Vieira, 2000, p. 29).

Critical thinking is clear and rational, involves precise and systematic skills and follows the rules of logical and scientific reasoning (Lau, 2011, p. 1).

It is a set of skills and attitudes that result in the evaluation of the reasoning of a speaker or writer, using specific generally accepted criteria for strong reasoning. For example, that a conclusion should have a reason in the first place is a standard that requires explicit attention. Multiple strategies could advance the learning of critical thinking. I prefer to teach CT by emphasizing the asking of questions because that approach seems optimal to me in terms of acknowledging and activating curiosity, while emphasizing the worth of ongoing wonder. But others might opt for a more didactic approach. A

### Definition

Critical thinking is that mode of thinking – about any subject, content, or problem – in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them.

John Dewey defined critical thinking as “reflective thought”-to suspend judgment, maintain a healthy skepticism, and exercise an open mind. These three activities called for the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief in light of the ground that supports it. Dewey’s definition suggests

that critical thinking has both an intellectual and an emotional component. Thus we view critical thinking as the intellectual and emotional ability to go beyond the known without “ falling to pieces”. Students must be taught to examine, poke, question, and reflect on what they have learned. Skepticism, questioning, and reflection are essential. Examine a problem, find a solution, think about why you were or were not successful, and learn from your successes and failures. In summary, critical thinking involves students in doing things (probing, questioning, etc.) and thinking about the things they are doing (reflecting, evaluating teacher feedback, etc.).

Richard Paul uses this definition:

Critical thinking is thinking about your thinking, while you’re thinking, in order to make your thinking better. Critical thinking is disciplined, self-directed thinking which exemplifies the perfections of thinking appropriate to a particular mode or domain of thought. It comes in two forms. If disciplined to serve the interests of a particular individual or group, to the exclusion of other relevant persons and groups, it is sophistic or weak sense critical thinking. If disciplined to take into account the interests of diverse persons or groups, it is fair-minded or strong sense critical thinking.

#### Characteristics of Critical Thinkers

🌐 Are honest with themselves, acknowledging what they don’t know, recognizing their limitations, and being watchful of their own errors.

Base judgments on evidence rather than personal preferences, deferring judgment whenever evidence is insufficient. They revise judgments when new evidence reveals error.

Are interested in other people's ideas and so are willing to read and listen attentively, even when they tend to disagree with the other person.

Recognize that extreme views (whether conservative or liberal) are seldom correct, so they avoid them, practice fair-mindedness, and seek a balance view

#### five Components of Critical Thinking

##### Language

Thinking can't be separated from language since both tend to have three primary purposes: to inform, persuade and explain. Language denotes (designates meanings) and connotes (implies or suggests something), and relies heavily on the use of metaphors. Metaphors are powerful language tools, which are able to influence how individuals think and problem solve. These figures of speech give great color and depth to one's language. Metaphors can be short phrases, stories, or even poetic renditions and is a verbal message that listeners can easily interpret and visualize.

##### Argument

An argument is a claim, which is used to persuade that something is (or is not) true, or should (or should not) be done. An argument contains three basic elements: an issue, one or more reasons or premises, and one or more

conclusions. An argument can be either valid or invalid based on its structure and only premises & conclusions are reached, which are either true or false.

The goal of critical thinking is to implement a sound argument, which has both a valid or proper structure and contains true premises. This is where using logic makes all the difference.

### Logic

Logic incorporates two methods or types of reasoning: deductive and inductive. Deductive reasoning relies on facts, certainty, syllogisms, validity, truth of premises sound arguments and supported conclusions. Inductive reasoning relies on diverse facts, probability, generalizations, hypotheses, analogies and inductive strength.

### Emotion

Trying to leave emotion out of almost anything is impossible as it is part of everything people do and think. Emotions are the number one cause of creating and putting into place thinking and operating barriers, which are continually used as a defense mechanism. Critical thinkers do not ignore or deny emotions but learn to accept and manage them.

### Perception

Perception is considered to be the manner in which individuals receive, interpret and translate experiences. How individuals perceive things works to define how they think. Perception tends to provide individuals a significant filtering system.

### Skill #1: Interpretation

What it means: Having the ability to understand the information you are being presented with and being able to communicate the meaning of that information to others. Throughout your career you will be presented with a variety of information in many different types of situations. Imagine you are looking at demographic information, hoping to target a different group of customers for a new product. Interpretation skills will enable you to better decode the information and add clarity to what you have discovered – which in turn will help you better understand any potential new customer opportunities for your company.

### Skill #2: Analysis

What it Means: Having the ability to connect pieces of information together in order to determine what the intended meaning of the information was meant to represent. Imagine you are reading a companywide memo that is discussing making changes in order to address recent movement within the business landscape. Having this skill will better provide you with the ability to “read between the lines” and help you understand how this will impact the overall strategy you have in your position.

Application Exercise: To practice this skill, try to determine the meaning behind this Chinese Proverb: “Be the first to the field and the last to the couch.” Are you able to identify the intended meaning behind this statement? While we all analyze information a little differently, you should have been able to determine that this proverb is referencing having a hard

work ethic. Go here to practice some more in order to further develop this skill.

### Skill #3: Inference

**What it Means:** Having the ability to understand and recognize what elements you will need in order to determine an accurate conclusion or hypothesis from the information you have at your disposal.

Picture yourself as a business manager; you are looking at the latest sales forecast and you see sales have decreased. It's important for you to be able to understand what additional information you may need in order to determine why that happened, including identifying internal issues, external competition or even economic conditions. The ability to understand the information you already have and determine what you may still need to find the best solution is an important skill for you to have no matter what career field you are in.

**Application Exercise:** Try watching an episode of a weekly crime show. Focus on absorbing the clues in an effort to determine the mystery of who completed the crime during the episode. These shows do a fantastic job of dropping clues and bits of information along the way that can help you make an educated guess prior to the end of the episode. Were you able to identify it correctly?

### Skill #4: Evaluation

**What it Means:** Being able to evaluate the credibility of statements or descriptions of a person's experience, judgment or opinion in order to measure the validity of the information being presented.

Imagine you are leading a focus group at work to determine how your customers view the organization's products. You ask the group a few questions that uncover several negative opinions about certain items you sell. You will need to use this skill to evaluate those responses, so you can determine if the information you received is valid and whether or not it needs to be further looked into.

**Application Exercise:** With the invention of the Internet this is a skill you can hone anytime you begin a search online. For practice, run a search on how to be a leader at work to test your evaluation skills. Are you able to identify whether the information you find is reliable and valid? Being aware of additional information you may need to make this assessment is essential. (Hint: In this example, you may need to evaluate the website's URL, the author's bio and potentially many other pieces of information.)

#### Skill #5: Explanation

**What it Means:** Having the ability to not only restate information, but add clarity and perspective to the information, so it can be fully understood by anyone you are sharing it with. Imagine you are giving two presentations for new product ideas; one to the CEO of the company, and the other to product engineers. You know both groups are extremely interested in hearing what you have to say, but you will need to be able to explain these ideas in two very different ways. The CEO may only need to hear high level ideas about <https://assignbuster.com/critical-thinking-essay-sample/>



the products while the engineers will need more specific product details.

Your ability to clearly explain your ideas while keeping in mind who you are presenting to is important for making sure the information is understood and well received.

Application Exercise: It's important to remember not everyone has or needs the knowledge or information you have. Practice this skill by explaining something complex that you have knowledge about to two different types of people. Use your kids and your spouse since they typically will not have the same level of knowledge of certain subjects. For example, explain to your kids and your spouse separately how a cell phone works. The explanation should be different since they have two different levels of knowledge yet both of them should receive a similar understanding of the subject.

#### Skill #6: Self-Regulation

What it Means: Having the awareness of your own thinking abilities and the elements that you are using to find results. Imagine you are on the phone with a customer attempting to work through a problem they are having with your company's software, and it's your first week on the job. The problem they are having is complex, and yet, you still want to assist them in order to make a good impression at work. Your ability to understand that perhaps transferring them to a coworker with more knowledge on the subject is the best way to provide the customer with a positive result.

Application Exercise: It's important to be able to separate your own personal biases or self-interests when making decisions at work. Let's imagine your manager asks you to write down 10 reasons why you deserve a raise prior to

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an annual review. After you complete your reasons, read through each and focus on identifying your own potential biases that may impact your argument. Awareness of these biases will help you generate a much stronger case for getting a raise.

So the next time someone starts talking to you about developing critical thinking skills for your career, hopefully now you will be able to tell them you know what they are, how they are used in the workplace and how to go about continually developing them for the future.

“ Do not take what I say as if I were merely playing, for you see the subject of our discussion—and on what subject should even a man of slight intelligence be more serious?—namely, what kind of life should one live . . .” – Socrates

Socrates (470-399 BC) was a Greek philosopher who, despite being considered one of the greatest and most important philosophers who ever lived, left no writings at all. Socrates engaged in questioning of his students in an unending search for truth. He sought to get to the foundations of his students' and colleagues' views by asking continual questions until a contradiction was exposed, thus proving the fallacy of the initial assumption. This became known as the Socratic Method, and may be Socrates' most enduring contribution to philosophy.

Socrates. Famous for asking deeper and deeper questions to get to the core of an issue, Socrates was a relentless advocate of critical thinking. He is said to have used Pythagorean triangles drawn in the sand to challenge skeptics on their limited view of the ' knowable'

Plato. While famous as both student and scribe of Socrates and an early political scientist, Plato was important in this discussion for driving concepts of perfected universals – truth, as one example – derived from accepted perfections in abstract mathematics. When we think about ideal solutions and archetypes, we owe a debt to Plato for asserting their importance, laying ground work for the modern framing of ‘paradigm’ (Kuhn) and ‘mental model’ (Senge).

### Critical thinking in the workplace

Why is critical thinking important in the workplace? Critical thinking is applicable whenever people are called to investigate in order to resolve a problem. This happens all the time in workplaces at any level. In fact not only managers have the responsibility of taking decisions, but people at all levels into an organisation are called to face and resolve problems inherent their area of expertise. Many decisions are taken without thinking too much as people are often asked to deal with problems which require immediate solutions. But for critical problems, bad decisions can negatively impact, sometime seriously, business. To mitigate the risk of serious negative consequences, it is important to take decisions which are carefully weighted and reasoned on the grounds of all the evidence provided and to take the right time to evaluate it.

Critical thinking is very important in the new knowledge economy. The global knowledge economy is driven by information and technology. One has to be able to deal with changes quickly and effectively. The new economy places increasing demands on flexible intellectual skills, and the ability to

analyse information and integrate diverse sources of knowledge in solving problems. Good critical thinking promotes such thinking skills, and is very important in the fast-changing workplace