

What Is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is the ability to think in an organized and rational manner in order to understand connections between ideas and/or facts. It helps you decide what to believe in. In other words, it's "thinking about thinking"—identifying, analyzing, and then fixing flaws in the way we think.

How to Be a Critical Thinker?

To become one takes time, practice, and patience. But something you can start doing *today* to improve your critical thinking skills is apply the 7 steps of critical thinking to every problem you tackle—either at work or in your everyday life.

Steps of Critical Thinking

1. Identify the problem or question.

Be as precise as possible: the narrower the issue, the easier it is to find solutions or answers.

2. Gather data, opinions, and arguments.

Try to find several sources that present different ideas and points of view.

3. Analyze and evaluate the data.

Are the sources reliable? Are their conclusions data-backed or just argumentative? Is there enough information or data to support given hypotheses?

4. Identify assumptions.

Are you sure the sources you found are unbiased? Are you sure you weren't biased in your search for answers?

5. Establish significance.

What piece of information is most important? Is the sample size sufficient? Are all opinions and arguments even relevant to the problem you're trying to solve?

6. Make a decision/reach a conclusion.

Identify various conclusions that are possible and decide which (if any) of them are sufficiently supported. Weigh strengths and limitations of all possible options.

7. Present or communicate.

Once you've reached a conclusion, present it to all stakeholders.

Top Critical Thinking Skills: Examples

- **Analysis:** the ability to collect and process information and knowledge.
- **Interpretation:** concluding what the meaning of processed information is.
- **Inference:** assessing whether the knowledge you have is sufficient and reliable.
- **Evaluation:** the ability to make decisions based on the available information.

- **Explanation:**
communicating your findings and reasoning clearly.
- **Self-Regulation:** the drive to constantly monitor and correct your ways of thinking.
- **Open-Mindedness:**
taking into account other possibilities and points of view.
- **Problem-Solving:** the ability to tackle unexpected problems and resolve conflicts.