



CRITICAL THINKING

Critical Thinking *Guide*

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Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is “The #1 Skill” that will help you stand out in today's fast-paced, AI influenced, ever-changing workplace. Leaders in every industry are desperate to hire employees who possess the ability to make strategic decisions with confidence, solve complex problems, and increase value to customers.

AND... None of us were born with a “Critical Thinking Gene”!

THIS is great news for YOU!

Because with deliberate practice you will become proficient in the skills that increase your critical thinking competency.

THIS is a huge advantage in everyday work tasks, during interviews, and in conversations with leaders who decide which opportunities you will be offered.

Whether you are a seasoned professional or starting out in your career, improving your critical thinking competency will boost productivity, improve decision-making, and increase your level influential across your organization.

Are you ready? Let's get started!

Critical Thinking

The Critical Thinking Skill Stack

Be Curious

Critical thinking requires creativity, innovation, and maintaining an open-mind. Being curious will help you spot patterns in the information you are looking at and make connections that are not obvious. Curiosity will lead the way to coming up with new solutions that have not been previously considered.

Another benefit of staying curious is that it fosters deeper connections with colleagues. People enjoy telling “their side of the story”. Colleagues will gladly share their perspective when they sense your interest in learning different perspectives.

Qualities and habits that increase curiosity skills:

- Imagining “What If”
- Drawing connections between ideas and data points
- Seeking diverse opinions
- Focusing on fairness
- Making time for reflection
- Identifying biased thinking (in ourselves and others)
- Being willing to be wrong

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Listen Intently

The ability to hear other people's opinions and listen carefully to their ideas and beliefs is an important element of critical thinking. We must be on the lookout for opinions and thoughts that differ from our own and the teams we are working with.

Through listening intently you show respect for the speaker, improve information retention, and improve your ability to interpret the information being shared.

Qualities and habits that increase intent listening skills:

- Being present
- Taking notes
- Staying open-minded
- Eliminating distractions
- Quieting your inner monologue
- Asking meaningful questions
- Avoiding interruptions (occasionally... this is necessary)
- Paying attention to your body language
- Recalling previous discussions / information discussed
- Understanding that waiting to talk is not the same as listening

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Analyze Information

Analyzing information requires us to carefully examine information, problems, data sets, and opinions. Then... to understand what the information means, draw connections, and clearly explain to others the implications and impacts of the information.

Qualities and habits that increase analytical skills:

- Researching facts and alternate views
- Questioning evidence and information sources
- Recognizing patterns
- Discovering what is an opinion vs. a fact
- Asking thoughtful questions
- Putting aside assumptions and judgements
- Seeking diverse thoughts and views

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Offer Solutions

One of the key outcomes in critical thinking is problem-solving. This includes analyzing a problem, generating and implementing a solution, and assessing the success of the implementation. Leaders are desperate to hire people who think about information critically and recommend practical solutions.

Qualities and habits that increase solution skills:

- Defining the problem clearly
- Brainstorming with colleagues & thought leaders
- Paying attention to the details
- Asking clarifying questions
- Identifying patterns
- Looking for simple solutions
- Creating Mind Maps to better visualize the issue

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Make Decisions

Developing critical thinking enables us to make logical and well-reasoned decisions based on evidence and objective analysis. We learn to consider all relevant factors and evaluate potential consequences, leading to more informed choices.

AND... when we become highly competent in the critical thinking skill stack we learn to trust our intuition and think independently.

Qualities and habits that increase decision making skills:

- Anticipating logical consequences
- Establishing priorities
- Being aware your biases
- Challenging preconceptions
- Reflecting on past mistakes
- Recognizing emotions that affect decisions
- Navigating risk & uncertainty
- Avoiding overconfidence

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Communicate Crisply

Sharing your thoughts, conclusions, and recommendations effectively is an important part of being a critical thinker. The ability to convey clear and concise messages that help colleagues and leaders understand a situation, take appropriate action, and navigate through challenging circumstances will set you apart as a thought leader in your organization.

Qualities and habits that increase communication skills:

- Paying attention to non-verbal cues
- Being brief and concise
- Avoiding vague language
- Tailoring messages to your audience
- Diffusing emotion with facts
- Preparing in advance for conversations and presentations
- Speaking clearly, slowly, and with slightly increased volume

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Activities that Build Critical Thinking Skills

- Ask More Questions (of yourself and others)
 - What do I currently know?
 - How do I know this is true?
 - How would your perspective be different if you were on the opposing side?
 - Can you give me an example?
 - When and how will we know if this solution works?
 - Why did you ask that question?
 - Why is this a problem?
 - How do I know this is a fact and not an opinion?
- Question Assumptions
 - Ask instead of assuming
 - Allow people to bring a new and fresh perspective
 - Question your thinking pattern
 - Choose to believe that people have good intentions
 - Withhold expectations
 - Collect data
 - Interrogate sources of “facts”
 - Explore alternatives

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Activities that Build Critical Thinking Skills

- Slow Down & Observe
 - Slow down your pace of processing information
 - Pay closer attention to your surroundings
 - Practice mindfulness techniques (meditation, breathing exercises, journaling, etc.)
- Engage in Debate
 - Select a topic
 - Assign positions
 - Prepare your arguments
 - Engage in the debate
 - Record the debate
 - Reflect and discuss
 - Switch sides
- Play Games
 - 2048
 - Soduko
 - Chess
 - Backgammon
 - Crossword puzzles
 - Video games that incorporate puzzles & quests

Critical Thinking

Activities that Build Critical Thinking Skills

- Investigate Assumptions
 - How can you tell a fact from an opinion?
 - Identify things presented as fact that are subjective or unproven
 - Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Who is saying what? What reasons might be behind their statements?
 - Does the claim make sense? Who would disagree with it and why
 - How can you tell if the data is reliable? Can it be fact-checked? Has it been shared by other credible publishers
 - How do you know whether or not the presenter is biased? What kind of language is being used?
 - Expand your knowledge
 - Podcasts
 - Books
 - Conferences
 - Association membership
 - Learn a musical Instrument
 - Meditate / Yoga / Breath-work
 - Start a new hobby

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Activities that Build Critical Thinking Skills

- Use the 5-Why Technique
 - Begin with a specific problem.
 - What is it that you are having an issue with?
 - This will help the team focus on the same problem.
 - Ask why the problem happened and write the answer down below the specific problem you listed/
 - Keep asking “why” to each of the successive answers until you reach the root cause of the problem.
 - Note: The process may take more or less than five “why”s.