

Critical thinking

A stylized illustration of a human face in profile, rendered in dark blue. Instead of eyes, there are three interlocking gears: a red one at the bottom, a green one in the middle, and a yellow one at the top. Dashed white lines connect the gears to four colorful paper airplanes (blue, yellow, pink, and purple) that are flying in various directions. The background is a teal color with faint, light blue geometric shapes like squares and circles.

ELA Induction Meeting

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WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

“Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.”

—*The Foundation for Critical Thinking*

10 Traits of the *Critical Thinker*



Curiosity



Compassion



Awareness



Decisiveness



Honesty



Willingness



Creativity



Perseverance



Objectivity



Reflection



In order to get good answers, we must learn to ask good questions. How do we do it? It's easy with a 5-step process like this one.

There are 5 characteristics for you to consider when shaping your question, with a list of some exploratory points to go with them. Use a few, or all of them.

Once you've framed your new question(s), review them critically on your own or with a partner. You can always go back and revisit steps if you need to.

You can use these points to practice asking good questions for so many different situations, and for projects of every kind.

Form text and polls questions, interviews, use them in your own creative writing projects, for great problem solving, and more.

The Ultimate Cheatsheet for Critical Thinking

Want to exercise critical thinking skills? Ask these questions whenever you discover or discuss new information. These are broad and versatile questions that have limitless applications!



Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... benefits from this? ... is this harmful to? ... makes decisions about this? ... is most directly affected? ... have you also heard discuss this? ... would be the best person to consult? ... will be the key people in this? ... deserves recognition for this?
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... are the strengths/weaknesses? ... is another perspective? ... is another alternative? ... would be a counter-argument? ... is the best/worst case scenario? ... is most/least important? ... can we do to make a positive change? ... is getting in the way of our action?
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... would we see this in the real world? ... are there similar concepts/situations? ... is there the most need for this? ... in the world would this be a problem? ... can we get more information? ... do we go for help with this? ... will this idea take us? ... are the areas for improvement?
When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this acceptable/unacceptable? ... would this benefit our society? ... would this cause a problem? ... is the best time to take action? ... will we know we've succeeded? ... has this played a part in our history? ... can we expect this to change? ... should we ask for help with this?
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this a problem/challenge? ... is it relevant to me/others? ... is this the best/worst scenario? ... are people influenced by this? ... should people know about this? ... has it been this way for so long? ... have we allowed this to happen? ... is there a need for this today?
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this similar to _____? ... does this disrupt things? ... do we know the truth about this? ... will we approach this safely? ... does this benefit us/others? ... does this harm us/others? ... do we see this in the future? ... can we change this for our good?

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Class debates

*Richard finds an expensive looking ring in the school hallway one day. It has no name on it and it's not near anyone's locker. **Should he:***

1. Give it to lost and found
2. Ask if it belongs to anyone there
3. Keep it and not say anything

Class debates

*Judy's friend is stressed about an upcoming test. If she fails the test she'll be kept back a grade and won't be able to graduate with Judy and her other friends. Judy already took the test and got 100%, so she knows all the answers already. **Should she:***

1. Just give the answers to her friend
2. Use her knowledge to coach her friend
3. Not get involved at all

Class debates

*Nick overhears two students bragging about having posted some inappropriate images of a female student online for a joke. He is friends with both boys but has recently heard that they've done similar things to a few other female students in the past. **Should he:***

1. Mind his own business
2. Report the incident to the school principal
3. Confront the boys and defend the student