



INSTRUCT TEACHING GUIDE

5. THINKING CRITICALLY

If your students are learning about making connections between complex and contradicting pieces of information to draw logical conclusions, refer to:

- Why Thinking Matters
- Introduction to Analysis
- Synthesis

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Why Thinking Matters

Being aware of the critical thinking process will help students develop strong decision making skills. To help them tune in to their critical thinking mindset, first ask students to describe a time in their professional or academic life in which they made a decision without thinking critically. What was the problem that needed solving? What did they do? What would they have done differently had they stopped to think about their course of action?

In the following week, students will keep a log of instances in which critical thinking helped them solve a complex problem. Ask your students to discuss their experience and findings in small groups or as a class.

Analysis

Help students understand that they use analytical skills on a regular basis by asking them to describe a time they encountered contradicting perspectives on a particular issue. Students should be able to discuss the issue at hand (maybe contrasting academic sources, inconsistencies in misleading news reports, or two articles citing different results from a case study), how they examined the conflicting points of view, and how they arrived at a logical conclusion.

ACTIVITIES

Critical Thinking

Divide students into small groups and assign each a scenario. Ask students to write a concise problem statement to articulate the issue at hand. Next, students will write down their answers to these follow-up questions:

- What do you already know about the issue?
- What was your emotional response to the situation?
- What additional information will you need to fully consider the situation?
- What questions would you ask to further analyze the situation?

This teaching guide can be used by Instruct customers who have selected the Critical Thinking content package.

Using real world scenarios will help students see the value of critical thinking when making decisions in their personal, academic, or professional life. Scenarios could include:

- *You decide to write a complaint to the city planning department after witnessing the removal of trees in your neighborhood.*
- *You want to quit your job and take a gap year before beginning a graduate program, but you need to save money to pay for tuition.*
- *During your last year of college, a family friend offers to sell you their house located a short distance from campus. You have already made several professional contacts in the area, but are open to relocating for the right job.*

Analyzing Information

This activity will help students practice two essential research skills: organizing their work and analyzing the relationship between sources. Select a topic that your students are unfamiliar with, and ask them to locate 5 or 6 sources about the topic in a variety of formats (ebooks, journal article, podcast, blog post, etc.). For each source, they should find the title, author, source, publication date, format, and keywords. Students should type the information into a single document and print it out. Distribute copies to pairs of students and ask them to cut out each source. Prompt students to arrange their sources chronologically or thematically. Next, students will order the sources according to importance and justify their ranking.

For a more challenging activity, ask students to arrange the sources in order of relevance to a research question.

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