

Critical Thinking Guide to Skillful Reasoning

The Critical Thinking Guide to Skillful Reasoning and Infographic* offer students an approach for applying critical thinking skills in discussion boards and assignments. It is also intended as a tool for faculty when helping students expand their critical thinking skills. The Critical Thinking Guide can be used sequentially, moving through Steps 1 through 6, or it can be used diagnostically, to increase specific skills when increasing rigor and critical thinking in the classroom.

Steps to Sound Reasoning		Questions to Guide Your Thinking
 <p>1. Description of the Issue or Problem Briefly summarize the issue clearly and objectively. Describe the main ideas or aspects of the issue.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without judgment or bias, describe the issue and clarify its key elements. What are the main ideas, events, definitions and concepts? What factors influence this issue?
 <p>2. Defining Positions Objectively examine multiple positions, perspectives and beliefs. Include positions held by professionals and experts.</p> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is this issue understood by different people? What are common assumptions and beliefs about the issue? What do professionals and experts suggest? How do you know they are experts?
 <p>3. Evaluating Evidence Evaluate evidence to identify strengths and weaknesses in arguments and counter-arguments including bias, authority, validity and strength. Are these sources and evidence reliable and credible? Why or why not?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence is relevant to the investigation of this issue? What information and data justifies key points of view? What information or positions do or do not stand up to scrutiny?
 <p>4. Comparison of Positions Without bias, compare and contrast positions, arguments and ideas.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the essential arguments, positions, or ideas surrounding this issue? What key points and evidence should be included in the final analysis? What are the implications of the different positions?
 <p>5. Personal Position Connect facts, assumptions, evidence and perspectives to draw conclusions and develop arguments. Recognize and respond to counterarguments and weaknesses about the position you support.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What perspectives do you agree with and why? What is your position on the issue? What evidence supports this position? What arguments challenge your position? What might be potential implications of your position or effects of your recommendations?
 <p>6. Further Questions What further questions, sources or information would guide next steps in exploring this issue?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What resources or ideas might provide more insight into this issue? What further questions should be asked?

* This guide was adapted from the [LEAP Critical Thinking Value Rubric](#) developed by Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU).

Additional Resources

- The Critical Thinking Community (2014). Found at [Criticalthinking.org](http://criticalthinking.org)
- Falcione, P. (1990). *Critical Thinking: A statement of expert consensus for purposes of educational assessment and instruction - a Delphi Report*. The California Academic Press, Santa Clara, CA. Retrieved from: http://assessment.aas.duke.edu/documents/Delphi_Report.pdf