

# Critical thinking checklist

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[US sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/](https://www.sussex.ac.uk/skillshub/)

Identify what's important:

- What are the key ideas, problems, arguments, observations, findings, conclusions?
- What evidence is there?
- Distinguish critical from other types of writing (eg descriptive); fact from opinion; bias from reason

Evaluate what you find:

- Explore the evidence - does it convince?
- What assumptions are being made and inferences drawn?
- Is there engagement with relevant, up to date research?
- How appropriate are the methods of investigation?
- Is there a consistent and logical line of reasoning?
- Do you agree with what's being said? Why?
- How is language being used (emotive, biased etc.)?

Look beyond what you're reading/hearing:

- What other viewpoints, interpretations and perspectives are there? What's the evidence for these? How do they compare?
- How does your prior knowledge and understanding relate to these ideas, findings, observations etc.?
- What are the implications of what you're reading/hearing?

Clarifying your point of view:

- Weigh up the relevant research in the area
- Find effective reasons and evidence for your views
- Reach conclusions on the basis of your reasoning
- Illustrate your reasons with effective examples

**Note** - Critical thinking skills need to be understood and developed in the context of your subject discipline - check this out with your tutors.

## Keep in touch

While the checklist covers many skills, qualities and activities that can be involved in critical thinking, it does not attempt to be definitive. Please email us if you think of further additions - or if you would like to add to the discussion of the nature of critical thinking above.

## Know your skills

To be a successful student it helps if you are as aware as possible of how you currently learn. This meta-cognitive awareness puts you in a good position to see gaps and areas for development. You may want to use this checklist to reflect on your current critical thinking skills.

Academic enquiry is dynamic in nature - don't necessarily expect to 'wrap everything up' and reach water-tight conclusions.

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