

Critical thinking skills

Introduction

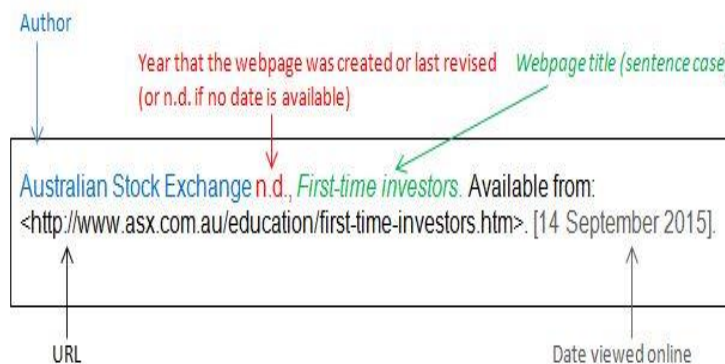
According to ThoughtCo. (2022) their opinion on critical thinking is that it "refers to the ability to analyse information objectively and make a reasoned judgment". It also says that critical skills include ensuring that the sources that we use, we evaluate them to ensure the reliability of the research findings. But Cottrell (2017) states that we use critical thinking skills every day for example wondering should we assume that what we see or hear is correct. It is also said that our critical thinking skills are important in every part of life. For example, it can benefit our thinking by improving our awareness and attention and helps us be more aware and conscious of our own actions.

Referencing and Plagiarism

Referencing is when we recognise/give credit when using another individual's work for our own use. For example, when writing an essay we will use other's research for our own use, so it is important that we acknowledge all the research we may use within the essay. To research we may use books, websites and data, while also using words directly from the source or write the text in your own words. Referencing is important as it provides you with evidence to support your research, to give the writer credit for their work that you may have used, demonstrates reliability and authority and be useful for others use.

Also, it is important to reference as it ensures that we avoid Plagiarism. According to the University of Oxford, (no date) they describe Plagiarism as when we use information from someone else's research and do not give them recognition for their work. Which is seen as introducing another person's research as your own viewpoints. Sometimes, plagiarism is accidental (non-intentional) but can also be carried out on purpose. The consequences of plagiarism can range from lenient to severe consequences. For example, the student's reputation can be ruined, lead to becoming expelled or excluded or even be sued by the author of the research. A study by Dordoy (2002, cited in Neville, 2010, p.32) showed that 59% of students plagiarised to receive better results. 54% admitted to could not be bothered, 29% said they did not understand what was required of them and another 29% said they did it unintentionally or without realising.

Example of a Harvard reference :



(National College of Art and Design, no date)

Academic writing

White, M (no date) describes academic writing as a "formal writing style used in colleges and universities". Moore (2008) has a similar opinion. She says that universities use academic writing for students to complete assessments. When carrying out academic writing, it is important to consider who is your audience?, the message you are trying to get across, the purpose of the writing, references used, why you have need given that assignment? When carrying out an academic piece of writing it is important that we do not use abbreviations. For example, using words such as "didn't" instead of "did not". This way the writing sounds more professional and ensures that everyone understands what is being said and the writing is clear. If using numbers, make sure to write those numbers such as "twenty five percent" instead of "25%". This makes sure everyone is clear of what is being said. Academic writing involves using evidence to back your arguments and do research before writing your academic piece. Researching the chosen topic assists us to support our reasons and arguments within in the topic. Heavily researching a topic allows us to provide correct information and then referencing proves that the information we have provided is true.

The IPACE model is used in most universities to assist students when organising and developing their academic writing piece. There are 5 elements within IPACE these are Identity, Purpose, Audience, Code and Experience.

Reflection

Reflection plays a big part in critical thinking as it makes us look back to the past at experiences we have experienced. For example, you may reflect on what went well, what did not go so well?, how could have it gone better, what can I do next time to provide myself with a bigger and better outcome? Cottrell (2017) states that there can be challenges associated with reflection. These can include distraction, confusion, feelings and skills. Bolton (2014) adds to this by including little ambition to carry out reflection and scared of what the reflective writing might uncover about past events. She continues to talk about the benefits, including developing mental discipline, allows us to develop emotionally, and contributing towards our continuing professional development.

Kolb's Cycle of Reflective Practice



(RSCP, 2020)

The theorist David Kolb developed a theory on reflection (1984). He believed that there was four learning experiences, which he developed to assist others when learning from past events or experiences. These included, Concrete experiences, Reflective observation, Abstract conceptualisation, Active experimentation. His process is simple for others to reflect. Another theorist called Gibbs developed Kolb's theory further by developing a more in-depth explanation on the cycle of learning and how we use those thoughts to improve future practice. Donald Schon also developed a theory on reflective practice. His theory focused on reflecting in action, unlike Kolb reflecting after an experience. Shon developed Reflection – in- action and Reflection – on - action. Bolton (2014) describes reflection- in – action as "hovering hawk in the mind" as we automatically use our knowledge and skills in our brain into action. Reflection – on – action is when we reflect after an experiences.

Conclusion

Equally, these 3 topics within critical thinking are all important for everyone to use. These topics are all important within student life and are used in everyday life.

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