

What is Critical Thinking?

Critical Thinking is all about asking questions, building skills and using them effectively to solve problems and make decisions. According to Chatfield it is "setting out actively to understand what is really going on by using reasoning, evaluating evidence and thinking carefully about the process of thinking itself."

(Chatfield 2017, page 6).

A good critical thinker does not criticise or become swayed by the opinions of others but puts all the evidence together to make informed decisions.

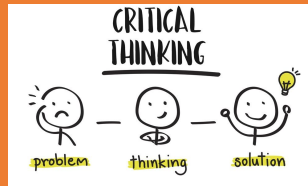
A critical thinker identifies the opinions of others, evaluates their points of view and gives a fair judgement of their evidence. (Cottrell, S. 2017) There are various skills that help people to develop their critical thinking skills. Examples of these skills are open-mindedness, communication, time management and effective note-taking and research

1. Open mindedness

Being open-minded involves being open to differing views and information. To think critically you must be able to empathise with others and accept that the way you view the world may not be the best way for everyone.

Reynolds et al (2013) suggested that having an open-minded approach to different situations, alongside the correct research and evidence, can develop your decision-making skills. A critical thinker needs to show empathy, be flexible and be willing to learn from their mistakes.

Albert Einstein theorised that "The measure of intelligence is the ability to change."



2.Communication

Communication plays a huge role in developing critical thinking skills. Effective communication requires you to be a good listener, be professional and know what to say and when to say it.

People who have the ability to solve problems and see things from other people's perspective tend to be better at communicating. (Mindtools.com)

Being able to see things from other people's perspective comes with experience and practice.

3. Note taking and research

The biggest part of studying at University is attending lectures, taking notes and conducting your own research. As university students you are responsible for what you learn through researching. There are many sources of information that can be used, including books, e-books, articles, podcasts, blogs, websites and social media sites. By using a variety of resources students will gather as much information as possible and be able to select information that is reliable, relevant and up to date.

During lectures most students take notes, everybody has their own style for note-taking, some write down everything word for word, while others use keywords, short-hand or mind mapping.

Godfrey (2010) gives hints on note-taking, she suggests writing notes in your own words and highlighting the key points.

By using your own notes from lectures and researching various medias students will develop their own critical thinking skills.

4. Time management

Time management is when you plan your time to incorporate your study and your other commitments at work and home. There are always too many things to do in one day and by managing your own time effectively students can learn to prioritise the important activities.

Cottrell (2008) suggests the use of a diary to keep up to date with university work and all the other activities they have on.

Other strategies include list making and setting realistic, achievable goals. By setting goals for themselves students may feel more able to focus on what needs to be done. Working towards your goals you will learn new skills and gain knowledge. Self-confidence will be boosted by achieving goals. (Moulder. H)



Conclusion

To conclude I believe that having and using this range of skills and personal qualities, will actively encourage the development of critical thinking, both in your academic study and your professional life.