

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the mental process of forming and evaluating an opinion or argument in order to make a judgement about a subject.

It is about balancing the argument and evidence for and against. To succeed in your studies you need to think critically about all things you read, see or hear.

5 Steps in critical thinking:

Step 1: Listen to ~~read~~ all the information carefully

Whether you are reading a book or an ~~article~~ listening to a lecture, it is important that you focus carefully to note the important information, before looking at it with a critical eye. Practice the reading skills of skimming, scanning and ~~reading~~ (and look at the advice sheet [Critical Reading](#)) Pay attention to the fine detail. It is important to focus on the exact wording to ensure that you have not misread anything.

Step 2: Categorise the information

Many of the articles and books you will read will be on similar topics, and include similar information. In order to be able to think critically, you will need to ~~identify~~ categorise so that you can make contrasts and ~~compare~~ (the left hemisphere of the brain controls the ability to read and write) (the right hemisphere of the brain controls the ability to draw and create)

When the right hemisphere is damaged, some individuals find it impossible to recognise or imagine the picture.



Step 3: Identify other people's positions, arguments and conclusions

An argument generally includes three elements: the evidence or reasons for the claim and the assumption (the beliefs which support the claim as being valid). For example:

The author's overall argument is normally stated in the introduction chapter or section. As this is broken down into different parts, the argument will occur in different paragraphs. It will not always be the first sentence, but it will be close to the beginning of the paragraph. When reading the author's argument, you need to be aware of another person's point of view.

Step 4: Weigh up opposing arguments

Here are few of the types of fallacies that occur in arguments:

Jumping to conclusions This is when conclusions are made and the facts, ideas or beliefs provided do not justify this conclusion, for example, assuming that binge drinking is a big problem among teenagers when only a group of 100 students were surveyed.

Causality