

Five Tips to Improve Your Critical Thinking

Facilitation Guide



Tool for

Intellectual Character



15 minutes



Educator-prep
Lifelong Learners

Materials

- Watch:
[Five simple strategies to sharpen your critical thinking](#)

Making Connections

Principled Innovation asks us to work with others and recognize the limits of our own knowledge so that we can better understand and tackle the complex issues our communities face.

Connecting Character Assets:

[Reflection](#)
[Critical thinking](#)

About this Guide

Understanding our strengths and weaknesses in critical thinking is an important part of catching ourselves from falling into repeated cognitive traps. Use this reflective activity to help participants consider their strengths and weaknesses in critical thinking.

Critical thinking builds on the Intellectual asset of [truth-seeking](#), with its focus on considering multiple [perspectives](#) and evaluating sources of information to ensure that they are grounded in reality and objectivity. Critical thinking is also rooted in intellectual [humility](#) – as critical thinkers, we must be willing to question our own beliefs and open to changing our minds in response to new or conflicting information. Critical thinking is necessary for [moral and ethical decision-making](#): by insisting on [bringing together](#) sufficient information to [inform decision-making](#), it ensures that Principled Innovation moves away from egocentrism to consider one's own beliefs in light of others'. Critical thinkers understand that as we engage in dialogue with others, our beliefs today become tomorrow's biases, and the process of learning is never complete.

This reflective activity surfaces five important tips for improving our critical thinking. Knowing our own strengths and weaknesses in this important skill is a starting point for helping us avoid missing out on key insights into the root causes of the problems we face and in staying open-minded to possible solutions.

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Instructions

The speaker in this video spells out five tips for improving critical thinking:

1. Beware of confirmation bias
2. Embrace nuance and complexity
3. Practice intellectual humility
4. Check your sources
5. Avoid fallacies

1 Reflect

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Which of these five actions come easiest to you?
2. Which are the hardest? Why are these areas hard for you?

2 Discuss

The speaker mentions two important fallacies. Provide an example of how you have seen politicians or other social actors engage in these fallacies.

1. How do those fallacies short circuit the critical thinking process?
2. What are the implications of that for our society's capacity to solve its greatest problems?

Being skeptical of claims is often considered to be a fundamental component of critical thinking.

1. How could these tips be seen as a way of acting on healthy skepticism?
2. What steps can you take to increase your propensity to engage in critical thinking?