Critical Thinking

You’ve been thinking all your life, of course, for thinking is simply the interaction of ideas. However, thinking is somewhat similar to other skills, like reading, playing soccer, or singing. Practice and education can improve it. So even though you “know how to think” already, you can improve your thinking by learning about the tools and habits that produce the best thinking. Effective thinking skills will help you learn academic and non-academic material more effectively.

Critical thinking might be defined as an approach to understanding a topic through deliberate consideration. You closely examine an idea before accepting it into your beliefs and understanding. This suspension of judgment before examining the information is crucial. Then analyze the idea by breaking arguments or claims down into parts to discover the relationship between them.

**Critical thinking studies a subject or problem with an open minded systematic approach where judgment is delayed until the ideas can be analyzed.**

**Steps taken during critical thinking**
Step 1 Define what is to be learned/studied
Step 2 Think about what you already know about a subject
Step 3 Gather information with an open mind (don’t limit yourself)
Step 4 Organize information into a format that can be understood easily
Step 5 Evaluate supporting and contrasting views
Step 6 Establish a better understanding on a subject that is based on evidence
DAPIC (to bring back IMaST memories)

Define
Assess
Plan
Implement
Conclusion
Additional Information

**Little Details Matter:** Pay attention to words like ‘may’, ‘can’, and ‘will’. There’s a huge difference between something that *will* happen and something that *might* happen.

**Sweeping Away Statements:** Over-generalization usually discredits an argument’s validity from the get-go. Examples of these knock down sentences that use words like ‘all’ and ‘everyone’. Not all people do, and not everyone knows. More careful wording such as ‘most’ and ‘some’ are more easily accepted.

**Requirements of Good Judgment/Critical Thinking**

**Attention:** In a word, pay attention to the claims around you. Too many statements and opinions are held due to a lack of attention or effort in evaluating its claims. Always research all sides of an issue, even if it’s not required. One viewpoint might look convincing by itself, however it might look quite different once the other perspective is known.

**Awareness:** A wideness of view, the ability to look around and encompass the totality of thought rather than remain fixed within the narrow confines of one’s own perspective.

**Independent Judgment:** A final attribute of the critical thinker, and really a summary of the other three, is the ability to form independent judgments based on good evidence. Evidence must be collected, weeded through, and pieced together into meaningful conclusions. This time of thinking is clear and critical.