

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING FOR WRITING ESSAYS

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In this article, I give full definition for the term “Critical thinking” and how to utilize it in writing essays. Additionally, you can differentiate types of critical thinking and how to achieve critical thinking step by step. Here, one type of essay is given as an example for developing critical thinking.

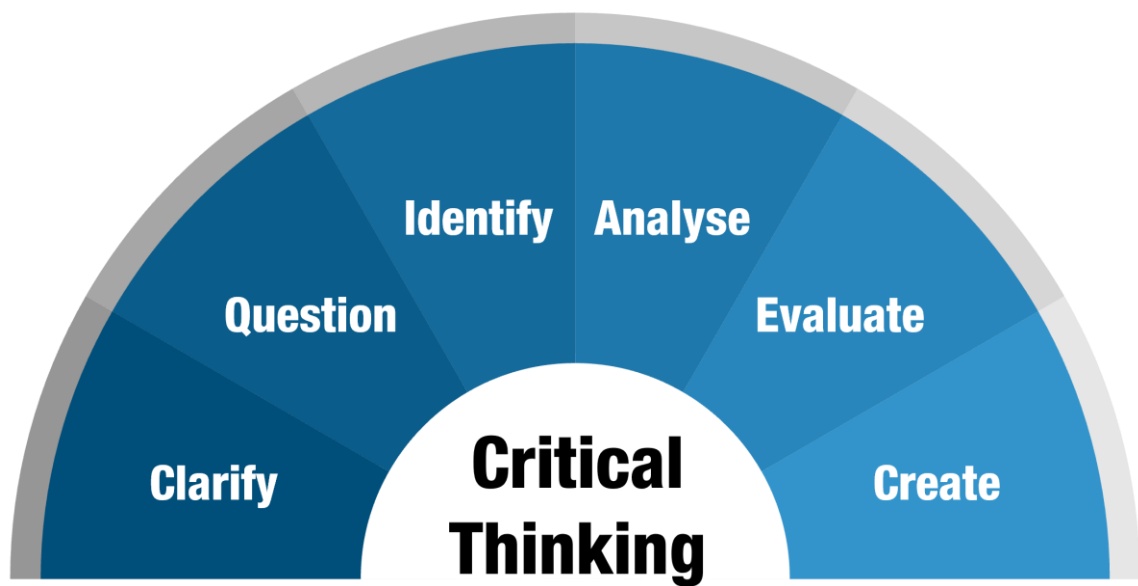
Key words: Critical thinking, open-mindedness, self-regulation, problem solving, analytical thinking, evaluation, interpretation, observation, compare and contrast essay.

Do you know why students get low grades for their essays? The only reason is lack of critical thinking skill. Critical thinking is crucial in our today’s world. This term has begun in the 20th century and has developed till this time. As Al-Hileh(2020) stated, this skill is used for problem solving, making informed decisions and fulfilling any goals. Undoubtedly, successful essays are not made without critical thinking skill. In fact, it is the ability to think logically, clearly for gathering and evaluating information. As Ennis stated (1985: 45), critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do. It consists of several interpersonal and analytical skills. Here, you can see 8 most important critical thinking skills:

1. Open-mindedness: This is the part of critical thinking process that helps you analyze information for coming to an unbiased conclusion
2. Problem solving: If we use it correctly, it helps us to solve any problem- from a workplace challenges to difficulties in everyday life.
3. Self-regulation: It regulates our thoughts and opinions. Here we should to question the information to come to the best conclusion.

4. Analytical thinking: It is part of critical thinking that evaluates data and rejects bias to gather information.
5. Communication: As it includes presenting evidence and supporting conclusion, the main task is to share decision with other stakeholders.
6. Evaluation: Here we have to be confident while making a decision based on the data we have available.
7. Interpretation: We should choose the most important and relevant information for our situation. Then, we can come to the best conclusions with that collection of data.
8. Observation: We use this skill to identify potential problems. It makes critical thinkers look for things beyond face value and embrace multiple points of view

There are several steps to reach critical thinking:



First, students should clarify the topic; second they should use questioning techniques in order to identify problems, after analyzing it, they can evaluate

problem and finally they can create solution. While doing this process, critical thinkers should ask themselves following questions:

- What is happening?
- Why is it happening?
- What assumptions am I making?
- How do we can solve this problem?
- How reliable is this information?
- How important is this information?
- Is this information outdated?
- Am I making any assumptions about this information?
- Are there additional versions?
- Have I analyzed the information from every perspective?
- Are there any viewpoints I have not noticed?

It depends on students' ability, if they are active learners, they can achieve to the last step. The term "active student" means becoming more self-aware; being active listener, being curios. Those are key traits of good critical thinkers and this kind of technique helps them not to stay as passive recipient. As a result, they will be comfortable and challenge their hypothesis in order to make the best conclusion. Good critical thinkers are comfortable with ambiguity and are willing to challenge their hypotheses in order to come to the best conclusions.

According to Kelley and Shemberg (1995), critical thinking is considered to be central to higher levels of education or a fundamental goal of learning. So, the best way to boost students' critical thinking is to make them practice comparison and contrast essay a lot. By doing this they can develop their higher-order thinking skills, enhance their comprehension, and tackle complex problems, at the same time they can strengthen their memories. In fact, critical thinking does not mean to be negative or critical of everything, in contrast it is being objective and having an open,

inquisitive mind that helps to solve problems more effectively. By practicing writing skill, students will be forced to think, explore and evaluate ideas. As I mentioned above, writing plays crucial role to develop critical thinking. As Caplan (1984: 55) pointed out that “The compare and contrast essay is one of the most important writing lessons that students can master.” It means that writing forces to think and explore ideas, so it takes main role in education. For University students it is vital in order to build the ability for reflecting idea and make logical connections between ideas. Additionally, compare and contrast essay engage students in independent and reflective thinking. If you want to be a good critical thinker, you should have following important qualities:

- Being able to think independently
- Being able to investigate situations
- Being able to find out advantage and the relevance of different opinions
- Being able to make crucial questions
- Being able to support own ideas with proper evidence

Having such qualities, students will not have any problems for writing essays, especially “Compare and contrast essay”, because they will have ability and capacity for thinking at a higher level.

In conclusion, it can be said that both professional and university setting values critical thinking. In fact, it leads to different skills such as judgment, evaluation and problem-solving. As I mentioned above, critical thinking makes students explicit and evaluate ideas at the same time being able to choose necessary tools for effective discourse. Actually, its main purpose is to make you understand the world better and to be able to avoid manipulation. It is not only educational skill, but also it is a life skill.

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