# Critical Thinking

## What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking means:

* Examining ideas objectively and evaluating their merits.
* Challenging information you are given in a constructive manner (within the limits of your expected knowledge and research).

## Why is critical thinking important?

* The process of thinking critically allows you to breakdown, understand and synthesise information from a variety of sources, enabling you to formulate your own ideas about a topic, and present them convincingly supported by the evidence you have gathered.
* It helps you make informed judgments and create strong arguments of your own. You will be able to justify any claims you make based on evidence you have critically evaluated.
* It demonstrates that you can learn and think independently, which is central to studying at higher or degree level.

## Critical thinking involves:

* Asking considered questions to explore views, points and ideas.
* Actively seeking all sides of an argument.
* Raising questions about claims made by sources and the evidence used to support them.
* Identifying flaws in reasoning and logic.
* Assessing evidence for and against an argument or proposition.
* Identifying biasthat might affect your reasoning or that of your source.
* Checking accuracy.

## Critical thinking applies across all academic work, for example:

* Your research: critical thinking asks why and how it was conducted and considers its limits.
* A journal article: critical thinking identifies key issues and explores its reasoning and accuracy.
* Survey results: critical thinking asks what they show or suggest, whilst questioning methods.
* An idea: critical thinking asks why it is important, whilst identifying its flaws or contradictions.

**The language of critical thinking:**

As you write your assignments, indicate clearly that you have critically assessed the evidence it contains by using appropriate language, for example:

* The main weakness of this argument is that…
* The text does not fully explain…
* The author does not take account of…
* What this fails to resolve is…
* This method has several limitations…
* Newer studies contradict some of the claims made by…
* The study failed to address…

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