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1.2 What Is Critical Thinking?

In general, **critical thinking** is the use of reason in our decisions about what to do and what to believe. It involves disciplined thinking that is rational and follows the rules of logic. This means it is not scattered or wild thinking. It is thinking that requires the use of specific cognitive skills, especially the ones that we learned about in the last section. Do you remember what they were? Take the quiz and see if you can identify them without looking.



Critical Thinking Skills Quiz: Place a check mark next to the critical thinking skills we have learned about in section 1.1.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Laughing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication |

When you are done, turn back to section 1.1 and check your answers. How well did you do?



Activity Thought Experiment: Think of an activity you like to do. Perhaps it is an activity such as shooting free throws, skateboarding, surfing, playing soccer, dancing, writing stories, playing a particular video game, or painting.

My activity is: _____

Were you great the first time you did this activity? _____

Did you need to practice to get better at it? _____

What would happen if you quit practicing? _____

Would you do this activity as well as before if you quit practicing? _____

You probably realized when you did the *Activity Thought Experiment* that you weren't great the first time you tried the activity you had in mind. You needed to develop certain skills and practice them in order to be good at it. Critical thinking is like that. None of us are born great critical thinkers. We need to learn the critical thinking skills and practice them in order to be good at them. We need to remember that **our ability as critical thinkers grows in proportion to our use of our critical thinking skills—the more we use them, the better we are at critical thinking.**

Do you need to revise your prediction? If so, do it here.



“What is Critical Thinking?” Thought Experiment: In the space below, design a webpage that explains what critical thinking is based on what you have learned so far and why it is important.

Unit 2: Adding to My Critical Thinking Toolbox

Chapter 3

Some Basic Concepts for Critical Thinking

3.1 My CT Toolbox

Each of us has a CT toolbox that we need to fill to help us with our critical thinking. You’ve already started filling your toolbox, and by the end of this book, you will have one full of all kinds of great tools to help you out—provided you actually use them!



In this unit we are going to add some important tools. In Chapter 3 we will look at the difference between facts and opinions; learn to distinguish possible, probable, and proven; take a peek at evidence; and dabble in creativity, one of our critical thinking skills, and connect it to creative thinking and creative problem solving. Then in Chapter 4 we will focus on critical thinking and language, particularly emotional words and arguments; ambiguity; vagueness; and have some fun with doublespeak.



Toolbox Thought Experiment: Based on what you already know about critical thinking and how it relates to your own life, what kind of tools do you want to make sure get added? What would their function be? It’s okay to make up your own names for these tools, but be as precise as you can in describing how they would function in terms of helping you with your critical thinking.

3.2 Facts vs. Opinions

★ Student Poll: Place a check mark next to the places where you encounter facts and opinions.

Place	Facts	Opinions
School	_____	_____
Online	_____	_____
Books	_____	_____
Advertising	_____	_____
Texting	_____	_____
Conversations	_____	_____
Movies	_____	_____
Arguments	_____	_____
Blogs	_____	_____
TV	_____	_____
Lyrics	_____	_____

Looking at your list, are facts and opinions found in different places? Are there some places where you are more likely to find one more often than the other?

Take a stab at defining "fact":

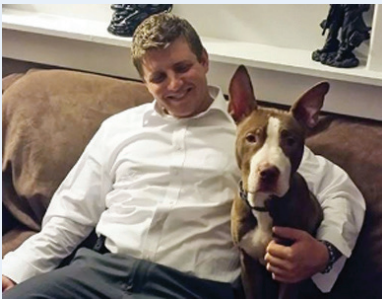
Give it a go now with "opinion":

Facts and opinions are everywhere. Facts can be found in all the places listed in the student poll and even more places besides those. We encounter opinions in these same places, though we may find that we encounter them more often in some of those places than in others, such as in texting or lyrics. The problem is that people often mix facts and opinions, and it is not always easy to tell if something is based on fact or opinion. As critical thinkers this means that we need to listen and read with a questioning mind. We cannot assume that because someone makes a statement with a sense

5.3 Recognizing Arguments



The Dog in the Rubble Thought Experiment: Here’s a passage based on a story from NBCNews.com dated Nov. 29, 2013. Read through this passage and construct an argument related to the story; for example, you could make an argument about the importance of providing emergency shelter for animals as well as people when there is a need to evacuate due to a natural disaster.



Recently a dog named Dexter was found under a pile of rubble nine days after a tornado damaged the apartment building he was living in with his owner, Jacob Montgomery, who is a member of the Illinois National Guard. Dexter was living on the third floor of the apartment building at the time of the tornado. A rescue group going through the rubble looking for animals found him and coaxed him out with hot dogs. He was malnourished, but otherwise he was okay. Dexter was very happy to see Montgomery and showed his happiness by excitedly wagging his tail.

You and classmates will get a chance to evaluate your arguments later, but for now make sure you can identify your conclusion and premise(s).

Conclusion: _____

Premise(s): _____

Look at the passage about Dexter again. Was it obvious to you when you read it that it wasn't an argument?

_____ Why? _____

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Unit 4: Applying My Critical Thinking

Chapter 7

Advertising

7.1 Introduction



The “All-Time Best Ever” Thought Experiment: What is your all-time, best ever, favorite commercial—you know—the one you actually watch? Why?

Okay, you know this is coming—what commercial drives you crazy—you just can’t turn the channel fast enough? Why?

We are going to come back to this when we look at advertising techniques and strategies, but for now keep these two in the back of your mind. Let’s start with the basics—a definition of advertising—despite the fact that we all seem to know it when we see it. **Advertising** is the paid communication about an organization’s products and/or services transmitted to a target audience through mass media that is meant to be persuasive; in other words, if you are a company or a business owner, advertising is the means you use (some form of media—such as a print ad or commercial) to persuade other people to buy your goods or use your services. This means that the main goal of your advertising is to create a demand for your goods and/or services. So part of your strategy as a company or a business owner is to figure out who your target audience is, the best medium to use to reach them, and what techniques to use to persuade them. As a consumer, however, it’s hard to avoid running into advertising. It seems to be everywhere. Help me out in the **Student Poll** by identifying all the places you’ve run into advertising.

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