

# Understanding the importance of Critical Thinking

Educator **Akhil Shahani** explains how analysing pieces of information, systematically solving issues and creating innovative solutions can make you a better professional

In this age of information overload, we are inundated with fake news and rumours via multiple WhatsApp forwards and social media feeds. How do we know what to believe and what not to? This is where critical thinking comes to the rescue.

Critical thinking is defined as the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue before drawing a conclusion. The youngsters are growing in an environment where one is prone to biases, irrationality and prejudices.

Learning how to think critically could make the difference between success and failure.

## ADVANTAGES

Key to career success: Critical thinking helps in any profession where you need to analyse information, systematically solve issues, create innovative solutions and elucidate it. This capability is used frequently by lawyers, analysts, accountants, doctors, engineers, reporters, and scientists.

**Better decisions in personal life:** Every day, you make thousands of decisions that do not require much thought. However, there are important choices like right career, life partner or buying a car, which require a deep understanding of situation using an unbiased logical decision process.

**Can make you happier:** A key component of being happy is by knowing and understanding yourself. Critical thinking reduces cognitive biases and negative thoughts that hold you

back. It helps you assess your strengths and weaknesses to help you decide areas of improvement.

**Improves your relationships:** Critical thinking enables you to formulate and convey your thoughts clearly to others, which helps them understand you better.

It makes you more open-minded and accepting of others points of view.

**Makes you better informed:** Critical thinking helps you sort through the overwhelming amount of

noise surrounding you to identify the truth that matters. You will be better able to spot fake news. Your opinion on issues will become more respected.

## DEVELOPING THE SKILLS

Five-step critical thinking process includes:

**Clearly define your question or problem:** Importance of what exactly you need to solve is important. For example, you may want to get a good job after graduation. You need to be very clear about what you define as a good job.

**Gather reliable information:** Consider only the most valid information from reputable sources and disregard the rest. For example, while searching a job, feedback of people in job review sites helps in making the final decision.

**Apply the information gathered:** A great way to start would be to ask the five 'W': Who?, What?, Where?, When?, Why? If you pick a course, you must ask yourself "Do I want to study this and take up a job related to this course?"

**Consider the implications:** Once you have got your questions answered and have a rough idea of what you have decided, consider what will happen once you have made the decision and if that outcome is acceptable to you.

**Explore other viewpoints:** Sometimes people will look at the same set of information and will come to different decisions.

This does not mean that one set of them is right and one set is wrong. It could just mean that they have had different experiences and have different needs from each other.

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