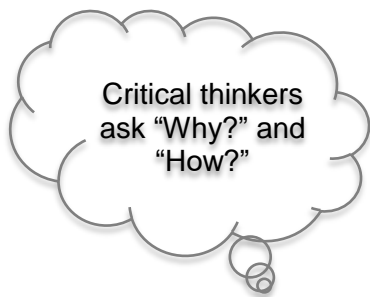


Analysis/Critical Thinking



Successful college students must learn how to be **critical thinkers** who are capable of **analyzing** information to arrive at logical conclusions.

What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is the intellectual process of conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information.

A critical thinker:

- asks questions that probe ideas, norms, and conventions;
- is *openminded* but *skeptical*: willing to accept new ideas in light of evidence, but not willing to accept every idea without question;
- avoids thinking simplistically about complicated issues;
- is aware of common flaws and biases in human thinking and attempts to draw conclusions objectively in order to maintain intellectual integrity.

Why do we need critical thinking?

We all have the ability to think, but like any muscle that strengthens with exercise, thinking critically requires effort and practice. Non-critical thinking is often flawed, biased, incomplete, uninformed, or even prejudiced. It is important to practice critical thinking in order to arrive at ideas and conclusions fairly.

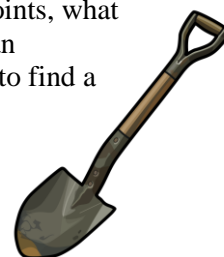
The process of critical thinking involves analysis, which is a key component of academic essays.

Analysis involves the close examination of information in order to interpret and evaluate its implications. Unlike writing a summary of a text (a description of the key points in your own words), analysis requires creative thinking and original ideas.

Analysis: close examination or study that interprets information in order to draw conclusions

Analysis requires you to dig into a text. Instead of focusing on obvious or superficial points, what can you find beneath the surface that someone else might not notice? Imagine you are an archaeologist digging for ancient artifacts. The deeper you dig, the more likely you are to find a hidden gem that no one else has found.

Once you find your artifacts—which, in this case, could be quotations, details, examples, or other evidence—you won't simply be describing them to your reader. Instead, you will explain the *meaning* of those artifacts.



Quick Notes:

- Critical thinking is a process of asking questions and seeking possible answers.
- There is usually not one correct answer to a big question.
- Analysis is the process of examining the implications of your question/answer.
- Academic writing is built on analysis!

How do you analyze a text?

Since analysis involves the attempt to answer questions using evidence and reasoning, start by asking specific questions that explore areas you want to analyze.

Analyze the argument and rhetorical strategies of the text

- Who is the intended audience and how does the author reach this audience?
- What is the author trying to persuade the audience to believe? How do you know?
- How effective is the text at communicating its standpoint and evidence?
- How effective is the text at persuading the reader?

Analyze the structure and tone of the text

- What type of text is it? A nonfiction article, a personal narrative, a work of poetry?
- How are the ideas presented in the text? How does the structure reveal the text's purpose?
- What sort of language does the text use, and what is the effect of this language?
- What style or tone is used, and how does the tone alter your perception of the text?

Analyze the authorial background and intent

- When and where did the author live, and how does this affect the ideas in the text?
- What is the author's attitude and outlook on life, and how does it appear in the text?
- What were the author's upbringing, physical circumstances, ethnic background, and social class?
- What other works has the author published, and how do they relate to this text?

Analyze the social, economic, or other context

- Who is this text intended to serve? Who in society does it put down or ignore?
- Does the author speak for the dominant part of society, or is s/he writing from a minority standpoint?
- Does the text glorify the wealthy or lift up the powerless?
- How does the text engage current social/economic/etc. issues with which you are familiar?
- Does the text have a positive or negative outlook on the issues it explores?

In order to write the most effective analysis, start by thinking of the questions that are most interesting to you and then reading closely to find information that helps you to explore answers to those questions.

