



Seeing Critical Thinking in Action

This training tool will guide you through an exercise to increase your ability to see critical thinking in action in yourself and your colleagues.

Consider these two lists:

Examples of Critical thinking skills in action:

- S1:** Taking time to get the problem right
- S2:** Designing and implementing new actions and initiatives
- S3:** Allocating limited resources optimally
- S4:** Analyzing and resolving conflicts
- S5:** Explaining the basis of policies and procedures
- S6:** Anticipating the implications and consequences of planned actions
- S7:** Anticipating risks and preventable errors
- S8:** Evaluating the effects of initiatives
- S9:** Evolving long term goals and plans
- S10:** Communicating effectively with team members
- S11:** Evaluating routine practices and policies
- S12:** Identifying and promoting leaders

Examples of Critical thinking mindset attributes in action:

- M1:** Concern to become well-informed and remain a learner
- M2:** Confidence in one's own ability to reason
- M3:** Open-mindedness regarding divergent world views
- M4:** Willingness to reconsider when new relevant information is available
- M5:** Flexibility in selecting alternatives and options
- M6:** Foresight with the intention to anticipate possible consequences
- M7:** Willingness to hear and understand the opinions and beliefs of others
- M8:** The habit of being thorough and systematic
- M9:** The need for finding evidence to support judgments
- M10:** Fair-mindedness when evaluating reasons and evidence
- M11:** Concern to make timely judgments, even when situations are uncertain
- M12:** Honesty in facing personal biases, prejudices, stereotypes, or egocentric tendencies

Now let's look at these inside of actual events.



Consider which of the Mindset and Skills examples appear to be in action in each of these examples. Identify at least one mindset attribute and skill for each scenario. One possible response is shown in 1).

- 1) M6, M8, M9, S1, S2, S4, S10 Your friend is angry. They tell you that they are not being respected at work. They express a rush of emotion and make snide comments about the people in their workplace. You help that friend examine their examples of disrespect and work with them to find a response that will help them control this situation.
- 2) _____ A manager strives for objectivity when settling a dispute. They begin by summarizing the alternatives, with fairness to all sides, and work to a settlement agreement.
- 3) _____ A team of scientists designs a project with great precision, attempting to anticipate all possible events and how they will be managed during the project. Then they carry out the planned project, gathering as much relevant data as possible and analyzing their data openly to maximize the fair-mindedness of their work.
- 4) _____ A creative writer organizes ideas, developing a new story. They attend to the complex motives and attributes of the emerging fictional characters. They watch these characters as the plot unfolds, hearing their words and feeling their response to unfolding events. Sometimes they don't like what they learn.
- 5) _____ The owner of a small business is facing a new round of challenges, as their clients make new demands on the delivery of services. You listen to their thoughts about the possible economic and human consequences of changes to current workplace demands on employees and potential actions to reduce costs.
- 6) _____ A master sergeant and a captain work out the tactical plans for a dangerous military mission that must be carried out immediately.
- 7) _____ A soccer coach thinks deeply during halftime searching for the best ways to attack the weaknesses of the other team when the match resumes.
- 8) _____ A trainee confidently and correctly explains to the group the exact reasoning process that they used to reach a particular conclusion, or why, or how a certain methodology or standard of proof could be applied.
- 9) _____ An educator uses clever questioning to guide a student to new insights.
- 10) _____ Police detectives, crime scene analysts, lawyers, judges, and juries systematically investigate, interrogate, examine, and evaluate the evidence as they seek justice.
- 11) _____ A policy analyst reviews alternative drafts of product safety legislation to determine how best to frame the law to benefit the most people at the least cost.
- 12) _____ An applicant prepares for a job interview thinking about how to explain their personal skills and experiences in a way that will be relevant and of value to their prospective employer.
- 13) _____ Parents anticipate the costs of sending their young child to college, analyze the family's projected income, and budget projected household expenses to put aside some money for that child's future education.
- 14) _____ A financial planner anticipates the impact of new income tax legislation on a client's future tax liabilities.
- 15) _____ A first responder comes upon the scene of an accident and quickly analyzes the situation, evaluates priorities, and infers what actions to take in what order.

Reflect on conversations and actions in your workplace where these thinking skills and mindset attributes would improve your team's achievements.