

## Glossary of Critical Thinking Terms

**Ambiguous:** having two or more possible meanings, either through deliberate intention or due to inexactness of expression; indefinite, uncertain.

**Argument:** a reason (or reasons) offered for or against something; the offering of such reasons; the word 'argument' may also refer to a discussion in which there is disagreement and suggests the use of logic and the bringing forth of facts to support or refute a point.

**Assumption:** a statement accepted or supposed as true without proof or demonstration; an unstated premise or belief; a belief taken for granted.

**Bias:** a mental leaning or inclination

**Cognitive processes:** generally understood as operations of the intellect that are innate or naturally occurring in the human mind.

**Concept:** an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or class of things.

**Conclude/Conclusion:** to decide by reasoning, to infer, to deduce; the last step in a reasoning process; a judgment, decision, or belief formed after investigation or reasoning. The terms 'conclude' and 'infer' may in many cases, be used synonymously. However, the term 'conclude' may also be reserved to mean the final step in the reasoning process.

**Criterion (criteria, pl):** a standard, rule, or test by which something can be judged or measured.

**Critical:** given to judging, especially fault-finding, censorious; involving or exercising careful judgment or observation; nice, exact, punctual; occupied with or skillful in criticism; of the nature of, or constituting a crisis; involving suspense as to the issue; decisive, crucial, important, essential.

**Critical reading:** critical reading is an active, intellectually engaged process in which the reader participates in an inner dialogue with the writer in such a way as to take ownership of the content read.

**Critical thinking:** the most fundamental concept of critical thinking is simple and intuitive. All humans think. It is our nature to do so. But much of our thinking, left to itself, is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed, or down-right prejudiced. Unfortunately shoddy thinking is costly, both in money and in quality of life. Critical thinking begins, then, when we start thinking about our thinking with a view to improving it.

**Cultural assumption:** unassessed (often implicit) belief adopted by virtue of upbringing in a society and taken for granted; example, "The United States is a Christian nation."

**Defense mechanisms:** a self-deceptive process used by the human mind to avoid dealing with socially unacceptable or painful ideas, beliefs or situations.

**Denial:** when a person refuses to believe indisputable evidence or facts in order to maintain a favorable self-image or favored set of beliefs.

**Dialectical thinking:** reasoning dialogically within two or more conflicting viewpoints; thinking within more than one perspective; testing the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view by putting them into debate-like conflict.

**Dialogical instruction:** instruction that fosters open discussion and debate of ideas from many perspectives.

**Didactic instruction:** pedantic instruction; teaching by telling.

**Domains of thought:** a logical system of meanings, each part of which is interrelated with every other part. Every domain of thought has a unique logic, with differing purposes, questions, information, concepts, theories, assumptions, and implication.

**Emotional intelligence:** bringing intelligence to bear upon emotions; using skilled reasoning to take command of one's emotional life.

**Fallacy:** deception, guile, trick, trickery; a deceptive or misleading argument, sophistical reasoning; delusive notion, an error, especially one founded on false reasoning.

**Fallacious:** an error in reasoning; flaw or defect in argument; an argument which doesn't conform to rules of good reasoning (especially one that appears to be sound); containing or based on a fallacy; deceptive in appearance or meaning; misleading; delusive.

**Higher order learning:** learning through exploring the foundations, justifications, implications, and/or value of a fact, principle, concept, subject, etc.; learning so as to deeply understand.

**Implication/imply:** implications are claims or truths that follow from other claims or truths. They represent logical relationships between ideas or things. **Imply** means to indicate indirectly or by allusion; hint; suggest; intimate; entail; **verbal implications** are ideas, assumptions, viewpoints, beliefs, etc. implied by the words used in speech or communication, given the logic of the language.

**Infer/inference:** an inference is a step of the mind, an act of the intellect, by which one concludes that something is so in light of something else being so or seeming to be so; it suggests the arriving at a decision or opinion by reasoning from known facts or evidence.

**Lower order learning:** learning by rote memorization, association, and drill.

**Media bias:** the news presented in accordance with the biases and prejudices of the culture it serves.

**Metacognition:** refers to awareness and understanding of one's thinking and cognitive processes; thinking about thinking.

**Monological problems:** one-dimensional problems that can be solved by reasoning exclusively within one point of view or frame of reference.

**Monological thinking:** one-dimensional thought conducted exclusively within one point of view or frame of reference.

**Perspective:** the faculty of seeing all the relevant data in logical relationship with one another, and with a broad view; seeing information, data, experiences in meaningful relationship with one another; a way of regarding situations or topics; a mental view or prospect; subjective evaluation.

**Point of view:** the precise place from which you view something; a mental position from which things are viewed; what you are looking at and how you are seeing it.

**Prejudice:** a judgment, belief, opinion, or point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the relevant facts are known; resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts that contradict it.

**Premise:** a proposition upon which an argument is based or from which a conclusion is drawn; a starting point of reasoning; assumption.

**Principle:** a fundamental truth, law, doctrine, value, or commitment upon which others are based; a basic generalization, accepted as true, that can be used as a basis for reasoning or conduct; guiding sense of the requirements and obligations of right conduct.

**Proof:** evidence or reasoning so strong or certain as to demonstrate the truth or acceptability of a conclusion beyond a reasonable doubt.

**Sociocentricity:** the belief in the inherent superiority of one's own group or culture; a tendency to judge alien people, groups or cultures from the perspective of one's own group.

**Socratic questioning:** based on the methods of Socrates, a mode of questioning that deeply probes the meaning, justification, or logical strength of a claim, position, or line of reasoning.