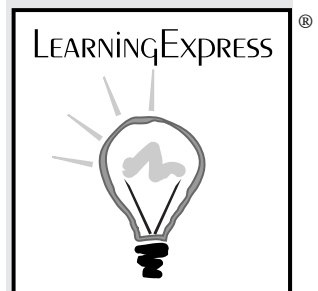


CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS SUCCESS IN 20 MINUTES A DAY

2nd Edition



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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



Critical Thinking Skills Success in 20 Minutes a Day is all about helping you think about the way you think. That's called *metacognition*, translated as “knowing about knowing” and meaning “to have knowledge of your own thoughts and the things that influence your thinking.” Sound complicated? It's not, especially when you learn how lesson by lesson, just 20 minutes at a time.

Critical thinkers approach a complicated situation with awareness of their thoughts, beliefs, and opinions, and how to direct them rationally. In addition, critical thinkers are willing to explore, question, and search for solutions to problems. All those skills add up to greater success at school, on the job, and at home. Colleges, universities, and many employers have identified critical thinking as a measure of how well someone will do in school or in the workplace. So, college entrance exams include critical-thinking sections, and many employers, including the government, administer exams, like the California or Cornell Critical Thinking Tests, to job applicants.

Generally, critical thinking involves both problem solving and reasoning, terms often used interchangeably. More specifically, critical thinking includes the ability to:

- make observations.
- listen attentively to others.
- recognize and define problems.
- be curious, ask relevant questions, and use multiple resources to find facts.
- challenge and examine beliefs, assumptions, and opinions.
- assess the validity of statements and arguments.
- know the difference between logical and illogical arguments.
- make wise decisions and judgments.
- find valid solutions.

Each lesson in this book explains a specific critical-thinking skill, and then lets you practice using that skill. Here's exactly what you'll find:

- Lessons 1 and 2 explain how to recognize and define problems. You'll practice prioritizing problems and spotting an actual problem versus its symptoms and/or consequences.
- Lesson 3 deals with how to be a better observer of situations around you. This will help you make logical inferences, a key critical-thinking skill that you'll practice using.
- Lessons 4 and 5 explore how graphic organizers can help you organize ideas and set goals. You will practice using these visual tools to lead from problems to solutions.
- Lesson 6 covers troubleshooting, the ability to spot difficulties that could interfere with your problem-solving goals. You'll practice removing setbacks before they happen to keep you on track for success.
- Lessons 7 and 8 explain where and how to find information to help you make wise decisions. You'll discover how to evaluate facts and figures to assure that they're accurate. This is especially important when using websites, which may have biased, misleading, or incorrect information.
- Lesson 9 covers the art of persuasion. You'll learn how to recognize persuasion when it is being used on you—and how to use it effectively yourself!
- Lesson 10 is about statistics and how they're often manipulated. You'll see what makes a survey valid and how to spot one that's invalid.
- Lesson 11 looks at the effect of emotions on critical thinking. Knowing how to keep your emotional responses in check is important to clear thinking.
- Lessons 12 and 13 explain deductive reasoning, one of two kinds of logic. You'll practice spotting the difference between valid and invalid deduction, which can lead to illogical ideas.
- Lessons 14 and 15 are about inductive reasoning, the other kind of logic. You'll discover how to make a valid inductive argument, and how induction is misused to create illogical conclusions.
- Lesson 16 covers how people intentionally misuse logical arguments to distract you from a real problem. You'll practice seeking out such distractions.
- Lesson 17 deals with judgment calls, those difficult decisions you have to make when there's no clear-cut right or wrong answer. Practicing how to calculate risks and consequences can help you make solid judgment calls.
- Lesson 18 explains how important it is to know the difference between an explanation and an argument. You'll practice telling them apart.
- Lesson 19 covers the kinds of critical-thinking questions used on exams for school admissions and employment. You'll practice answering some questions like those you will find on tests.
- Lesson 20 reviews all that you've read. This gives you a valuable quick-reference tool to use as a refresher anytime.

You may already be good at implementing some critical-thinking skills, but need help with others. So before you start, take the pretest that follows to find out how much you already know and what you need to work on. At the end of the book, there's a posttest to assess how much your skills have improved. For now, let's get started with that pretest. Good luck!