

Higher-Level Thinking in Research

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To think critically is to actively evaluate and intelligently apply information you possess or encounter – basically, to reconsider everything you read, hear, see, and think you know – all in an effort to discover the truth.

Any information can contain any number of defects. If you are not aware of that fact, you may reach conclusions or take actions based on erroneous or incomplete ideas. By developing higher-level thinking skills, you can make more informed decisions and achieve deeper understanding of yourself and the world.

Information exists everywhere. A percentage of that information can be incomplete, possibly inaccurate. Innocent mistakes (misinformation) such as typographical errors often occur. There are also individuals and organizations that, for various reasons, deliberately perpetuate lies (disinformation) or partial truths. It is unsafe to assume any information is complete and accurate.

What can you do? Evaluate all information you come across as much as necessary to come to the best possible determination.

Here are the kinds of questions you should ask whenever you encounter information:

- *Does the information completely and objectively satisfy my needs?*
- *Is the provider of the information qualified to distribute it?*
- *Is the information current or outdated? Does it matter?*
- *Is there any evidence of prejudice or unfairness?*
- *Are subjective statements presented instead of facts?*
- *Is the information propaganda or an advertisement?*
- *What is the person or organization's purpose or motive in providing this information?*
- *Is the information telling the whole truth or just one side of the story?*
- *Are there better sources of information available?*

When conducting research online, remember that anyone can publish information on the Internet and present it in a seemingly professional and convincing manner. How can you tell? The problem is you might not be able to recognize the problem immediately or at all.

Beyond asking questions, you should also consult more than one source in order to understand a topic from different points of view and to compare the “facts” as you receive them. An example is *Gale Opposing Viewpoints* which is accessible through our website.

With information tripling every 18 months it is crucial to locate, evaluate, and separate the good from the bad, the factual from the persuasive, and the fake from the authentic.

www.thrall.org

Critical Thinking Websites

Humboldt State University Library

(Internet evaluation, general CT resources, censorship, propaganda)

<http://library.humboldt.edu/infoservices/staff/ccm/crithink.html>

Foundation for Critical Thinking

<http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/index-of-articles/1021/>

Right brain or left brain? Take this test.

http://www.whercreativitygoestoschool.com/vancouver/left_right/rb_test.htm

Teacher Tap – Critical Thinking and Bloom’s Taxonomy

<http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic69.htm>

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

<http://www.p21.org/overview/skills-framework/260>

Critical Thinking in an Online World

<http://misc.library.ucsb.edu/untangle/jones.html>

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: why you should evaluate websites

<http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html>

Critical Thinking Co. – Definitions

<http://www.criticalthinking.com/company/articles/critical-thinking-definition.jsp>