Critical thinking
what it is and why it matters
Outline of workshop

• The key aspects of critical thinking
• How to apply critical thinking to reading for university
• How to judge whether something is well-argued
• How to critically evaluate research
Critical thinking is a key skill at university

“the world is flat”
“the moon is made of cheese”
“coffee is better than tea”

Don’t take things at face value.
Ask questions

Is it true?
How do you know?
What do you need to know to evaluate it?
Critical thinking exercise

• React critically to this statement:
  “China will soon become the number one English speaking country in the world”

What questions could you ask?
One minute to discuss in pairs
Critical thinking affects all aspects of study

Ideas for Assignments  
Reading  
Writing
Critically consider your ideas for an assignment

- **Focused**
  - all content relevant

- **Comprehensive**
  - considers all key reasons

- **Even-handed**
  - opposing views treated fairly

- **In depth**
  - reasons thoroughly considered
Critical reading model

Argument:
• What is the main argument?
• Is the main argument clear and logical?

Evidence:
• What is the evidence?
• Is the evidence valid?
• Does the evidence support the conclusions?
Judging an argument

**Good argument**
- Clear
- Logical structure
- Even-handed

**Poor argument**
- Unclear
- Flawed reasoning
- Biased
Activity

• Read the article (abstract)
• What is the author’s argument?
Questioning

• Why should I believe this?
• Does this claim need evidence to support it?
• What evidence would someone need to provide for me to think that this is probable/dependable?
Look for the evidence

- Statistics
- Case histories/studies
- References
- Findings from experiments
- Data from surveys
- Questionnaires
A checklist can help you to critically evaluate sources

Critical thinking signpost

https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/critical_thinking
Activity

• Use the worksheet to help you evaluate the selected source
• For your What/Who/When questions, focus on the information about the source and the abstract (all on the first page)

• If you get time, try to answer your How questions. For this you will need to read Section 2: Methods
• For question 11, see also Section 4: Discussion
Critical writing model

Argument:
- What is your main argument?
- Is the main argument clear and logical?

Evidence:
- What is your evidence?
- Is the evidence valid?
- Does your evidence support the conclusions?

- Relate this to your own writing
Other related workshops

- Critical writing
- Critical appraisal (aimed at Health students)
- Academic writing
- Structuring your essay
- See http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/workshops
Other resources

  • Shelved at 370.152/COT

  • Shelved at 801.95/BRO

[http://www.tees.ac.uk/depts/lis/infoskills_gen/critical/exercise.cfm](http://www.tees.ac.uk/depts/lis/infoskills_gen/critical/exercise.cfm)

  • Shelved at 519.5/SAL
Questions?