

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS



INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

1/2-DAY COURSE



CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

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Instructional Design and Learning Philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives provide effective tools for managing, monitoring, and evaluating training
- Meaningful connections between the topic and students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas helps students to focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques demonstrate useful behaviors and problem-solving skills
- Active application, the cornerstone to learning, helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistent instructions and design help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course to appeal to all learning styles and ensure that the ideas and information will be retained.

Instructional Design and Learning Philosophy (cont.)

Customizing Your Program

There are two ways you can customize this program: 1) Customize the content and 2) Customize the format.

Customizing the content is easy. The Instructor Guide and Participant Guide are created in Word, so you can simply modify the content just as you would any Word document. Some common reasons for customizing content include:

- Changing examples to fit your industry or work environment
- Modifying content to match work rules and procedures
- Adding, deleting or rearranging content to meet training time constraints

The other way to customize the program is to change the formatting. Typically, organizations will do this to add their corporate logo and/or colors, or it may just be an issue of personal preference. Again, treat the Instructor Guide and/or Participant Guide as you would any Word document. The styles used in this document are labeled HRDQ in the Quick Styles tab. For additional help using Word, consult the Microsoft website.

Preparing for the Training

As you know, preparation is the key to conducting an effective training. Here are some issues to consider:

Logistics

- Advertise the training with enough advance notice that participants can block it out on their calendars. Consider contacting potential participants' managers to encourage their attendance.
- Send a confirmation notice before the training reminding participants of the date, time and location.
- Room setup: Ideally, use round tables to facilitate partner and small group interaction.

Equipment and Supplies

In order for the training to go smoothly, have these supplies and equipment on hand:

- Name tags
- Flip chart and markers, tape
- Laptop with projector (for the PowerPoint)
- Blank paper and pens, sticky notes
- Timer or watch
- Rulers and rubber bands
- Newspaper article (about 5 copies)
- Water for yourself and the participants
- Beverages and snacks (optional)

Course Activities

Module One: Characteristics of Critical Thinking

Type of Activity	Segment	
	Course Objectives	
	What is Critical Thinking?	Reading
	Why Is It Important?	
	Curiosity	Written Exercise
	Awareness	
	Flexibility	Facilitation
	Common Sense	
		Group Activity

Module Two: Critical Thinking Mistakes

	Rationalization
	Emotional Thinking
	Biases

Course Activities (cont.)

Module Two: Critical Thinking Mistakes (cont.)

Type of Activity	Segment
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Tunnel Vision



Reading

Module Three: The Critical Thinking Process

Type of Activity	Segment
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EEE



Written Exercise



Examine



Facilitation



Explore




Evaluate



Group Activity

Module Four: Turning Thinking into Action

	Critical Thinking Practice
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Critical Thinking Evaluation Tool

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Module One



Characteristics of Critical Thinking

Course Objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and ability to:

- ◇ Define critical thinking
- ◇ Identify and adopt the characteristics of critical thinking
- ◇ Recognize and avoid critical thinking mistakes
- ◇ Identify assumptions
- ◇ Evaluate information accurately and thoroughly
- ◇ Distinguish between fact and opinion
- ◇ Implement the critical thinking process in business situations

Trainer Notes

5 minutes

Introduce yourself and provide a brief background if participants don't know you. Go over logistics (schedule, breaks, restrooms, etc.) and any ground rules for the day. Typical ground rules include no electronics in use, show respect for every participant, participate fully, no dominating or interrupting, etc.

Review the course objectives with participants.

Critical Thinking Skills

Course Objectives

- Define critical thinking
- Identify and adopt the characteristics of critical thinking
- Recognize and avoid critical thinking mistakes
- Identify assumptions
- Evaluate information accurately and thoroughly
- Implement the critical thinking process in business situations

What Is Critical Thinking?

What kind of transportation do you use?



Descriptions of critical thinking

Definition of critical thinking

What critical thinking is not

- ◇ Acquisition of information without evaluation
- ◇ Evaluation of information without investigating it
- ◇ Being argumentative or critical of other people

Trainer Notes

10 minutes


Activity to introduce:
 Work in small groups or with a partner. Share a bit about yourself, including the kind of transportation you use. Why did you choose that particular car or method? Debrief by sharing choices. Why didn't everyone make the same choice? How did critical thinking affect your choice (or not)?

Activity: Ask participants to list descriptions for critical thinking—you will likely hear things such as logic, logical reasoning, creative thinking, problem solving. You may also hear some negative terms such as know-it-all, negative thinking, pessimism, manipulation, etc. The point is to introduce critical thinking as a positively motivated tool for making good decisions.

Here is one definition:
 Critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and what to do. It uses the identification and evaluation of evidence to guide decision making.

Definition of Critical Thinking

- Critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and what to do.



Discuss what it is NOT (listed in the workbook).

Why Is It Important?

Critical thinking enables you to:

- ◇ Think independently
- ◇ Make better decisions
- ◇ Solve problems systematically
- ◇ Think more creatively
- ◇ Increase self-reflection

Specific benefits of critical thinking

- ◇ Detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning
- ◇ Recognize your own assumptions and biases
- ◇ Identify the importance and relevance of various ideas
- ◇ Reach well-reasoned conclusions and solutions

According to a study by The Conference Board, 400 senior HR professionals were asked to name the most important skill their employees will need in the next five years. Critical thinking ranked #1—above innovation or technology.

Trainer Notes

5 minutes

According to a study by The Conference Board, 400 senior HR professionals were asked to name the most important skill their employees will need in the next five years. Critical thinking ranked #1—above innovation or technology.

Critical thinking is a valuable skill in the workplace. It enables employees to think independently, make better decisions, deal with change quickly and effectively, think more creatively, and be more self-reflective—thus, more receptive to self-improvement.

Critical thinking helps you to do the following: Detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning, recognize your own assumptions and biases, identify the importance and relevance of various ideas, and reach well-reasoned conclusions and solutions.

Benefits of Critical Thinking



- Think independently
- Make better decisions
- Solve problems systematically
- Think more creatively
- Increase self-reflection

Curiosity

Think like a kid

- ◇ Take a “naïve observer” perspective instead of being a know-it-all
- ◇ Show some humility; don’t let pride or ego get in the way of clear thinking
- ◇ Ask questions that reflect your willingness to grasp and accept new ideas and conclusions
- ◇ Project inquisitiveness and excitement rather than skepticism or negativity

Activity

Instructions: Take a ruler and rubber band and combine them to make as many different uses as you can think of. List them below.

Make the point: If you are the type of person who only knows how to turn it on and drive it, do you see any value in learning more about cars? Would it help you make better decisions related to your type of transportation?

Activity: Divide participants into small groups. Give each group a ruler and a rubber band and tell them to create as many different objects as they can. Some uses you will probably see: Slingshot, bookmark, paper holder, guide for marking/cutting, water level indicator. Consider giving a small prize to the group who thinks of the most uses.

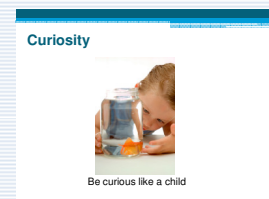
Make the connection to work: There are things you know how to do already, but perhaps it would be worthwhile to be curious about how or why you’re doing them.

Trainer Notes

10 minutes

In this section, we’ll discuss four important characteristics of critical thinking: curiosity, awareness, flexibility and common sense.

Curiosity: The purpose of critical thinking is not to be right, but to gather and assess the right information.



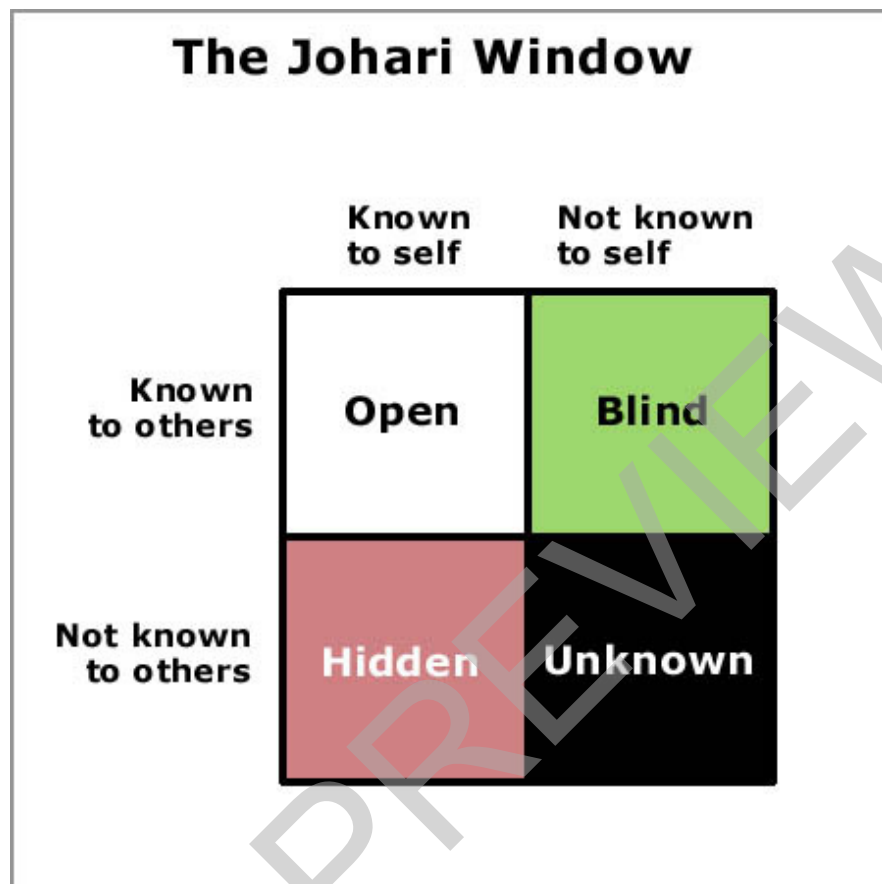
Naïve observer vs. know-it-all: Approach the issue from a “naïve observer” perspective. Imagine you know nothing about the issue and are hearing about it or seeing it for the first time. Remove all your preconceived notions.

Curiosity must be combined with humility. Don’t allow pride or ego to influence your position. Don’t stubbornly cling to a position when evidence points to the contrary.

Sticking with the vehicle analogy, ask participants: How inquisitive are you about cars? What about how cars run—do you know about different engines, transmissions, suspensions, brakes, tires, etc.?

Awareness

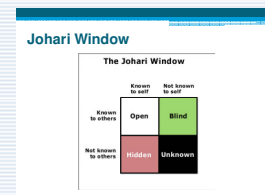
Awareness is knowing what you know, and knowing what you don't know.



Trainer Notes

5 minutes

Awareness is knowing what you know, and knowing what you don't know. This idea is best illustrated by Johari's Window, a concept developed in 1955 and named for its creators, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham.



This is particularly critical when examining our assumptions (which we'll get to later). Often, assumptions will fall in the Blind or Unknown categories—we don't recognize our own assumptions and biases.

An effective critical thinker must be able to discover his/her blind spots as well as the unknown in order to make reasonable, reflective decisions.

Returning to our transportation analogy: How many different makes and models of cars can you name? How many different types of transportation can you name? How about around the world? Debrief: If you don't know all your options, you might miss out on the optimal solution to your transportation needs.

Activity: Show this slide and ask participants how many human faces they see in it.

How Many Human Faces?



Seeing 4-5 faces is an average result, 6-7 is extremely observant and 10-11 is extraordinary. Debrief: Those who didn't see more than 4-5 faces probably weren't aware there were more—they had a blind spot.

Flexibility

Someone who is flexible:

- ◇ Is open to new information
- ◇ Changes approach or perspective in response to unexpected obstacles or changing conditions
- ◇ Adapts easily and rapidly to new situations and new information
- ◇ Considers alternative points of view without being attached to any one perspective
- ◇ Plays devil's advocate
- ◇ Deals with ambiguity without getting stressed out
- ◇ Solves problems through compromise and consensus and is willing to experiment with another person's ideas

Activity

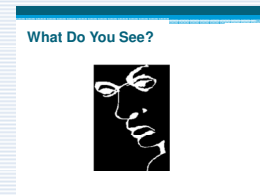
Instructions: Look at each group of words and think of another word that is associated with all three of them.

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|------------|-------|
| 1. turkey | shoulder | war | _____ |
| 2. sun | back | television | _____ |
| 3. floor | play | fair | _____ |
| 4. coffee | heart | down | _____ |
| 5. rage | tobacco | rash | _____ |

Trainer Notes

10 minutes

Show the following slide and ask people what they see.



Most people will immediately see the outline/profile of a face. If they can also see the word "Liar" written diagonally from upper left to lower right, they have a flexible perspective.

The opposite of flexibility is a need for certainty, resistance to ambiguity or considering any alternative besides their initial one.



Play devil's advocate: Explore the opposite point of view from your original one and see what new opportunities or options arise.

Back to the transportation analogy: Ask participants how many have purchased the same car or brand more than once? Note: That's not necessarily a bad idea if they used a critical thinking process and arrived at the same car.

Common Sense

- ◇ Pay attention to the obvious
- ◇ Verification and accuracy: Are numerical figures accurate?
- ◇ Does it pass the “sniff test”? Think of outlandish urban legends, like stories of people who follow their GPS when it tells them to drive into a building!
- ◇ Consider the source

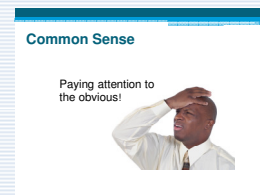
Common sense quiz

1. How many birthdays does the average man have?
2. You have two US coins totaling 55 cents. One is not a nickel. What are the coins?
3. If there are 3 apples and you take away two, how many do you have?
4. Divide 30 by $\frac{1}{2}$ and add 10. What is the answer?
5. Two men play five games of checkers. Each man wins the same number of games. There are no ties. Explain this.
6. If you had only one match and you walked into a room where there was an oil burner, a kerosene lamp, and a wood-burning stove, what would you light first?
7. A farmer has 17 sheep; all but 9 die. How many are left?
8. Is it legal for a man in California to marry his widow's sister? Why?

Trainer Notes

10 minutes

Common sense means paying attention to the obvious. It's not as easy (or as common) as it sounds.



*Example: A resident doctor was making the rounds and saw a patient with a black tongue. She immediately ran through all possible diagnoses with that symptom. Meanwhile, the attending doctor asked the patient if he used black cough drops—he had.
Lesson: Pay attention to the obvious.*

*Common sense quiz:
Conduct with the entire group or allow several minutes for participants to answer on their own.*

Answers:

1. One
2. A 50 cent piece and a nickel. Only one is not a nickel.
3. Two
4. 70
5. They were playing different people
6. The match
7. Nine
8. No. He's dead.

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