

GENERAL ESSAY 2020

Importance of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. Someone with critical thinking skills is able to do the following:

- understand the logical connections between ideas
- identify, construct and evaluate arguments
- detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning
- solve problems systematically
- identify the relevance and importance of ideas
- reflect on the justification of one's own beliefs and values

Critical thinking is not a matter of accumulating information. A person with a good memory and who knows a lot of facts is not necessarily good at critical thinking. A critical thinker is able to see consequences from what he knows, and he knows how to make use of information to solve problems, and to seek relevant sources of information to inform himself.

Critical thinking should not be confused with being argumentative or being critical of other people. Although critical thinking skills can be used in exposing fallacies and bad reasoning, critical thinking can also play an important role in cooperative reasoning and constructive tasks. Critical thinking can help us acquire knowledge, improve our theories, and strengthen arguments. We can use critical thinking to enhance work processes and improve social institutions.

Some people believe that critical thinking hinders creativity because it requires following the rules of logic and rationality, but creativity might require breaking rules. This is a misconception. Critical thinking is quite compatible with thinking "out-of-the-box", challenging consensus and pursuing less popular approaches. If anything, critical thinking is an essential part of creativity because we need critical thinking to evaluate and improve our creative ideas.

The ability to think clearly and rationally is important whatever we choose to do. If we work in education, research, finance, management or the legal profession, critical thinking is crucially important. But critical thinking skills are not restricted to a particular subject area.

Being able to think well and solve problems systematically is an asset for any career.

Critical thinking is very important in the new knowledge economy. The global knowledge economy is driven by information and technology. One has to be able to deal with changes quickly and effectively. The new economy places increasing demands on flexible intellectual skills, and the ability to analyse information and integrate diverse sources of knowledge in solving problems. Good critical thinking promotes such thinking skills, and is very important in the fast-changing workplace.

Critical thinking enhances language and presentation skills. Thinking clearly and systematically can improve the way we express our ideas. In learning how to analyse the logical structure of texts, critical thinking also improves comprehension abilities.

Critical thinking promotes creativity. To come up with a creative solution to a problem involves not just having new ideas. It must also be the case that the new ideas being generated are useful and relevant to the task at hand. Critical thinking plays a crucial role in evaluating new ideas, selecting the best ones and modifying them if necessary.

Critical thinking is crucial for self-reflection. In order to live a meaningful life and to structure our lives accordingly, we need to justify and reflect on our values and decisions. Critical thinking provides the tools for this process of self-evaluation.

Good critical thinking is the foundation of science and democracy. Science requires the critical use of reason in experimentation and theory confirmation. The proper functioning of a liberal democracy requires citizens who can think critically about social issues to inform their judgments about proper governance and to overcome biases and prejudice.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, which includes developments in previously disjointed fields such as artificial intelligence and machine-learning, robotics, nanotechnology, 3-D printing, and genetics and biotechnology, will cause widespread disruption not only to business models but also to labour markets over the next five years, with enormous change predicted in the skill sets needed to thrive in the new landscape.