

The Key Components of Critical Thinking 5/30/07

NATURAL FLAWS OF THINKING

- Unconscious Thoughts, Emotions, & Desires
- Egocentrism, Sociocentrism
- Defense of the Ego, Denial, & Self-deception
- Passively Accepted Ideas
- Lack of Critical Thinking Skills

INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

- Fairmindedness
- Humility
- Courage
- Empathy
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Confidence in Reason
- Autonomy

ELEMENTS OF REASONING

- Purpose
- Question
- Information
- Assumptions
- Concepts
- Point of View
- Conclusions, Inferences
- Consequences, Implications

STANDARDS OF REASONING

- Clarity: understandable; the meaning can be grasped
- Accuracy: free from errors and distortions
- Precision: exact to the necessary level of detail
- Relevance: relating to the matter at hand
- Breadth: all parts or points of view; getting it all
- Depth: find complexities, interrelationships, & causes

- Logic: one idea accurately supports or leads to another
- Significance: an important point; not trivial
- Fairness: without self-deception, prejudice, or intent to manipulate; justifiable

CLARITY

Steps to make explanations clear:

- State: give a brief explanation
- Elaborate: expand on your explanation
- Illustrate: use metaphor, analogy, a picture
- Exemplify: give a concrete example

DEPTH

To think deeply, find the topic's:

- Parts: all complexities, parts, or aspects
- Interrelationships Between Parts of the Whole
- Fundamentals: fundamental ideas or components, or deepest causal factors
- Interrelationships with Other Topics or Ideas

THREE TYPES OF QUESTIONS

1. Fact: one system, one right answer
2. Preference, Opinion: no system, all answers are valid
3. Reasoned Judgment: multiple systems, better and worse answers

DOMAINS, FIELDS OF STUDY

[a partial list]

Sciences	History
Ecology	Psychology
Medicine	Arts
Mathematics	Law
Sociology	Philosophy
Economics	Ethics
Political Science	Religion