

Six Basic Critical Thinking Skills

Observing: Good thinking depends on careful observation. Watching, reading and listening (sometimes even tasting, smelling and feeling) are how we get the basic facts and information to use in thinking.

Classifying: Once we have the needed facts and information at hand, the next important skill is classifying them - or sorting them out.

Comparing: Once we have things sorted into appropriate classifications, the next important skill is comparing them. In everyday life we are constantly making comparisons.

Summarizing: One of the most useful of all critical thinking skills is summarizing. After gathering and organizing many facts, it is easy to deal with them in brief form. Summarizing is simply making something long into something short. , Keeping just the main elements and leaving out the less important ones.

Hypothesizing: We have the facts. We have classified and compared them. We can talk about them in summary form. Now we are ready to learn about one of the most exciting skills in critical thinking: hypothesizing, which is simply predicting what will happen next, based on the facts we already know. It is figuring out what is going on and how something will work.

Evaluating: This final critical thinking skill teaches children to look at all sides of an issue. A child is evaluating when he chooses if something is good or bad, worthy or unworthy.

OBSERVING

- Observe – pigeons, squirrels
- Watch ants scurry.
- Magnifying glass – What is hidden in and under leaves, legs of an insect, both sides of a leaf?
- Track down everything that is sticky.
- Read a story – What words make it exciting, or sad, or add beauty?
- View a TV commercial – What is the verbal message?
What is the visual message?
- Observe and describe the taste of various foods.
- Look for various objects, shapes and estimate size.
- Sit and people watch at the mall.

CLASSIFYING

- Stack plates
- Sort clothes by size, shape, color, texture
- Organize a shelf – sort cans small to large, by food groups, by type of container.
- Language arts – spelling words, long or short, descriptive book read throughout the year, TV programs.
- Science – different types of vehicles, fur bearing animals, rocks of various kinds, shells collected at the beach.
- Math – Types of containers of various sizes, things used to tell time.
- Social Studies – stones in the neighborhood, all the famous people you can think of, items in a trash can.

COMPARING

Compare the following;

- What to have for dinner?
- Language Arts
 - Two television programs
 - Two books
 - Two authors
- Science
 - Two leaves, plants or flowers
 - Reptiles and mammals
 - Respiratory system and digestive system
 - Bugs and birds
- Math
 - Ruler and a measuring cup
 - Clock and a yard stick
 - Shapes: ball to a lemon, hexagon and a diamond
- Social Studies
 - Two kinds of food
 - Two holidays
 - Two famous people
 - Two cities, states, countries

SUMMARIZING - Making something long into something short.

- Put the main idea of the following in brief form;
 - *a story or a TV program
 - *newspaper article
 - *a book read
 - *a comic strip
- Science – Results of an experiment. What does oil do when you mix it with water?
- Social Studies – The events leading up to a major event.

HYPOTHESIZING – After observing, classifying, comparing and summarizing; simply predict what will happen next, based on the facts you already know.

- Challenge your child to a contest to predict outcomes of events on the news.
- Why an author began or ended a book the way he/she did?

EVALUATING

- A child is evaluating when he/she decides if something is good or bad, worthy or less worthy, pro or con, plus or minus.
- As children get older help them develop the ability to evaluate by talking about the choices they face
Smoking, drinking, someone's actions