CRITICAL THINKING

HIGH SCHOOL VS. COLLEGE THINKING

One of the main differences between high school and college is **how your teachers expect you to think.**

- In high school, most classes focus on **building a *basic knowledge* base** — learning facts, rules, and concepts, often through **memorization.**

- In college, however, learning goes further. You are not only expected to **understand and remember** information but also to **analyse and evaluate** it. This is what it means to be a *critical thinker*.

MEANING OF CRITICAL THINKING

Being *critical* does **not** mean being *negative* or looking for faults. It means questioning ideas, forming judgments, and reacting thoughtfully to what you read or hear — instead of accepting everything as absolute truth.

THE BENEFITS OF CRITICAL THINKING

Developing critical thinking skills will help you succeed in college and in life.

In college:

- You will perform better on essay exams that require *analysis and reasoning*.

- You will write stronger essays and term papers supported by evidence.

- You will be able to identify *accurate* and *reliable* information and avoid misleading or incomplete sources.

In everyday life:

- You will make *smarter decisions* based on logic and evidence.

- You will manage money more wisely.

- You will better understand current events, politics, and social issues.

- You will develop more *active interests*, such as creative hobbies or informed discussions, instead of only passive entertainment like tv.

CRITICAL THINKING = ACTIVE THINKING

Critical thinking means reading and listening with *awareness and curiosity*. It is an **active** process. For example:

- When reading a **textbook,** ask yourself: *is the author trying to influence what I think?*

- When reading the **news,** ask: *is this the complete story, or did the journalist leave something out?*

- When seeing **an advertisement,** ask: *what message or emotion is being used to make me want the product?*

These questions help you become an *active reader* — someone who interacts with ideas rather than just absorbs them.

CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Decide whether each statement is **true (T)** or **false (F):**

- Thinking critically means finding ways to criticize and reject what you read.

- You only need to think critically when your teacher assigns a "critical-thinking" task.

- Magazines, websites, and other materials can also be used to practice critical reading.

- Critical thinking is only useful in college, not in everyday life.

- Critical thinking sometimes means using extra sources to understand a topic better.

THINKING CRITICALLY: EXAMPLE

Read this short passage and think about it analytically:

"Modern medical technology is amazing. People now live with organs — hearts, kidneys, even faces — donated by others. Perhaps one day, doctors will even be able to transplant brains. Yet these advances come at a high cost: our national medical expenses are nearing $3 trillion a year, more than what the country collects in income taxes."

Questions:

- Why might the author's use of "marvelous" sound partly ironic?

- Why does the author mention that surgeons might be able to transplant brains?

- What is the author attitude toward transplanted organs that you can understand from the phrase "people walk around with the hearts… of deceased people"?

We live in a world overflowing with information — from books and newspapers to websites and advertisements. Since information is everywhere, it's essential to know how to **filter** what really matters.

Tips for reading critically

- **Be selective:** you don't have to read everything you see. Skim quickly to see if a text is useful or relevant before reading deeply.

- **Identify the purpose:** ask yourself, *is this text trying to inform or persuade me?* Advertisers, for instance, use emotional images to convince buyers.

- **Adjust your speed:** read entertainment articles quickly, but take your time with important documents, such as financial or legal forms.

- **Read the fine print:** always check for hidden details, especially in contracts or statements. Important information is often placed in small print to discourage careful reading.

CRITICAL THINKING IN REAL LIFE: EXAMPLE

Hidden information

credit card companies make money by charging interest on borrowed money. Although the law requires them to explain their fees in your statement, this information often appears in *tiny print*. Some companies even sell "protection plans" for stolen cards at $99 per year — even though your card already protects you for free by law.

Question: would you pay the $99 for this plan? Why or why not?

Thinking critically means looking closely at such details before making a decision

CONCLUSION

Critical thinking should be part of *every* reading and writing task. For example:

✓When reading, ask if the author presents facts objectively or tries to shape your opinion.

✓When writing, make sure you explain your ideas clearly and support them with strong evidence.

✓When researching, always use *trustworthy sources.*

Strong critical thinking allows you to:

• Identify reliable information, and

• Write papers and essays that show *understanding, analysis,* and *reasoning.*