

Evaluating information and opinions

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Intermediate

NUMBER
EN_BE_3416X

LANGUAGE
English





Goals

- Can describe what critical thinking is and identify strategies to evaluate information critically.
- Can explain the usefulness of critical thinking at work and use these strategies to solve a simple set of problems.







Preview and warm-up

In this lesson, you will learn how to **evaluate information** and **opinions** using **critical thinking**.



Don't assume that you're too busy to think through an issue properly.
Critical thinking will actually save you time in the long run!



Warm-up

What do you think critical thinking is?





How do you make decisions?

How do you normally make decisions? Do you base your decisions on proof or on a gut feeling?

Can your decisions be supported by facts or anything that's not emotionally related?



Do you think critically?

If you were able to answer YES to the last question, then you engage in critical thinking. Well done!

Now go through and read out the following two vocabulary slides.

For each word, **provide one additional example sentence.**





Vocabulary

Analysis

A detailed **examination** of something
E.g.: We need to make a thorough **analysis** of the situation before we make a decision.

Evaluation

The making of a **judgement** about the **worth** or **significance** of something.
E.g.: Let's **evaluate** our options before we make our final decision.

Reason

The ability to **think, understand** and make **logical/sensible judgements**.
E.g.: You should use **reason** to determine what is right and wrong.

Logic

Reasoning based on **truth**.
E.g.: His argument seems ridiculous to me. I can't see any **logic** behind it.



Vocabulary

Objective Subjective

Something which is **objective** is based on **evidence and fact** rather than on personal opinion.

E.g.: You need to try and set your opinions aside and look at this situation **objectively**.

Something which is **subjective** is based on **personal feelings and opinions**.

E.G: How this artwork is interpreted is very **subjective**.

Bias

An **unfair judgment** based on your **personal opinions**.

E.g.: The hiring manager is clearly **biased** towards men. He seems to be hiring men over higher-qualified women.

Assumption

Something that is considered **true without proof**.

E.g.: He made **assumptions** about the market which turned out to be inaccurate.

Gut feeling

An **instinctive** feeling about something. When you somehow feel something to be true without any proof or facts.

E.g.: I have a **gut feeling** that this conference is not going to go well.



What is critical thinking?

- **Critical thinking** is the **objective analysis** and **evaluation** of information to make **logical decisions**.
- It requires the ability to completely **set aside your emotions, personal opinions and assumptions** when making decisions. Instead, it encourages the use of **logic** and **reason**.

- Critical thinking is useful in a **business environment** for helping you to gather all the information you need to make **informed business decisions** and find the best **solutions to problems**.
- It is also important for **teamwork** and **minimising conflict**.





Think

Can you think of any other reasons why critical thinking is important in the workplace?

What kind of business situations demand critical thinking?

How to evaluate information with critical thinking

Critical thinking skills are highly sought after by employers. The ability to **think critically** will help you become a **valued member of a team** and can help you see things from your **customers' perspective**. Here are some ways you can improve your critical thinking skills:

- **Be aware of your biases** and try to **set them aside** when you are making decisions
- **Ask questions and gather information.** Make sure everyone has the chance to **share their opinions in meetings**.
- **Work together** with your co-workers and ask for their **feedback**.
- **Reach solutions** as a **team**. When you are stuck on a problem, try and see it from **someone else's perspective**.



Qualities of a critical thinker

What qualities does a critical thinker have? Brainstorm as many as you can.

Curiosity

Open-
mindedness

Independence



Evaluate the pros and cons

Imagine you are a hiring manager and you are stuck between two candidates to hire for a marketing position. Evaluate each candidate's profile and the pros and cons of hiring them, before coming to a final decision on who to hire.

Sarah is **31 years old** with a **degree in marketing** from an **average university** and **4 years' experience** in the marketing field.



Mike is a **23-year-old recent graduate** from an **excellent, world-class university** with a degree in **politics and economics**. He has **no experience in the marketing field**, but has **1 year's experience** working as a **journalist** and a month's experience working in an **advertising agency**.





Critical thinking

When was the last time
you used critical thinking
to solve a problem?





Problem-solving

- **Problem-solving** involves **using critical thinking** to **analyse a problem** and find a **solution**.
- In the **workplace**, just thinking about something critically isn't enough. It is important to be able to **use your critical thinking skills** to actually **implement solutions**. This is known as **problem-solving**.
- Remember to **adopt the qualities** of a **good critical thinker** that you identified earlier when you are trying to solve a problem.

Problem solving checklist:

1. Identify the problem
2. Analyse the causes of the problem
3. Brainstorm all the possible solutions
4. Select the best solution and implement a plan





Problem-solving activity



Imagine you are an intern. Your boss says he needs five tasks done by the end of the day. However, two hours before your deadline, another colleague asks for your help with something. On top of that, the printer is broken, which is going to hinder you. What are you going to do? Use critical thinking to solve the problem.



Problem-solving activity

Each person in the class should think of someone famous. Now imagine how your famous person would approach the problem on the previous slide.



Think

Imagine you are in a meeting and you strongly disagree with one of your colleagues. How might you go about making your point politely? Can you think of any expressions you would use?



Asking and giving an opinion

In order to **evaluate** a situation **critically** and find the **best solution** to a problem, it is important to **fully understand other people's views**. Here are some phrases to ask for **someone's opinion**, to ask **for further clarification on a point** and to **give your own point of view**.

Asking for an opinion/further clarification	Giving an opinion
What are your thoughts?	In my opinion...
What do you think?	The way I see it...
What is your opinion?	I would suggest...
Could you expand on/elaborate on your point ...?	If you ask me...
What exactly do you mean by...?	I think/believe...



Expressing agreement and disagreement

- After **evaluation**, you will either **agree** or **disagree** with what someone else is saying.
- If you **disagree** with someone, it is important you make your point **politely**.
- Here are some expressions to express **agreement** and **polite disagreement**

Expressions for agreement (from strongest to weakest)	Expressions for disagreement
I couldn't agree more!	With respect, I can't agree to...
I completely agree.	I'm afraid I don't agree with you on that point.
You're absolutely right.	I understand where you're coming from, but...
I agree.	I see what you're saying, but I think...
I agree to an extent.	That is a fair point, but I have to disagree.
You may have a point there.	I'm not sure I agree with you on...



Fill in the blanks



1. Hi team. Let's have a discussion about this IT project. I was thinking about increasing the budget for it. I'd like to know all of your opinions on the matter. Let's go around the table. Lee, what are your _____?



3. I _____ with Lee. It's just not feasible at the moment, and I don't think spending more money will improve the situation. What is your _____, Rupert?



5. Well, I agree with you _____. I think it's something worth considering, but I _____ suggest waiting before making any hasty decisions. Angela?



7. What I mean is, I think we should wait a few months when we'll know for sure exactly what we need. Then we can reopen the discussion.

Fill in the blanks for this discussion in a meeting with an appropriate word/expression of agreement or disagreement. Try and use each one only once. Some of the blanks may contain more than one word.

2. I understand where you are _____ from, but I'm _____ I can't agree on this matter. We simply can't afford it right now.



4. If you _____ me, I don't have a problem with this proposal, so I _____ with you. I think it's a good idea. Sophie, what do you _____?



6. Well, I'm not exactly sure what you _____, Sophie. Could you please _____ your point?





Practise critical thinking and expressing your opinion

Evaluate the following statements. Try and think up of arguments for both sides of the debate. Then, decide which arguments are stronger, and using the expressions covered in this lesson, either agree or disagree with the statement, justifying your stance.

Social media marketing is more effective than traditional marketing methods.

It is always better to hire trained employees rather than investing in employee training schemes.

Companies should not have the right to look at applicants' social media profiles as a part of the hiring process.



Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

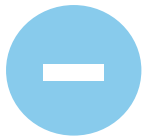
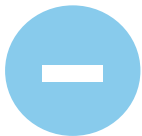
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Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?



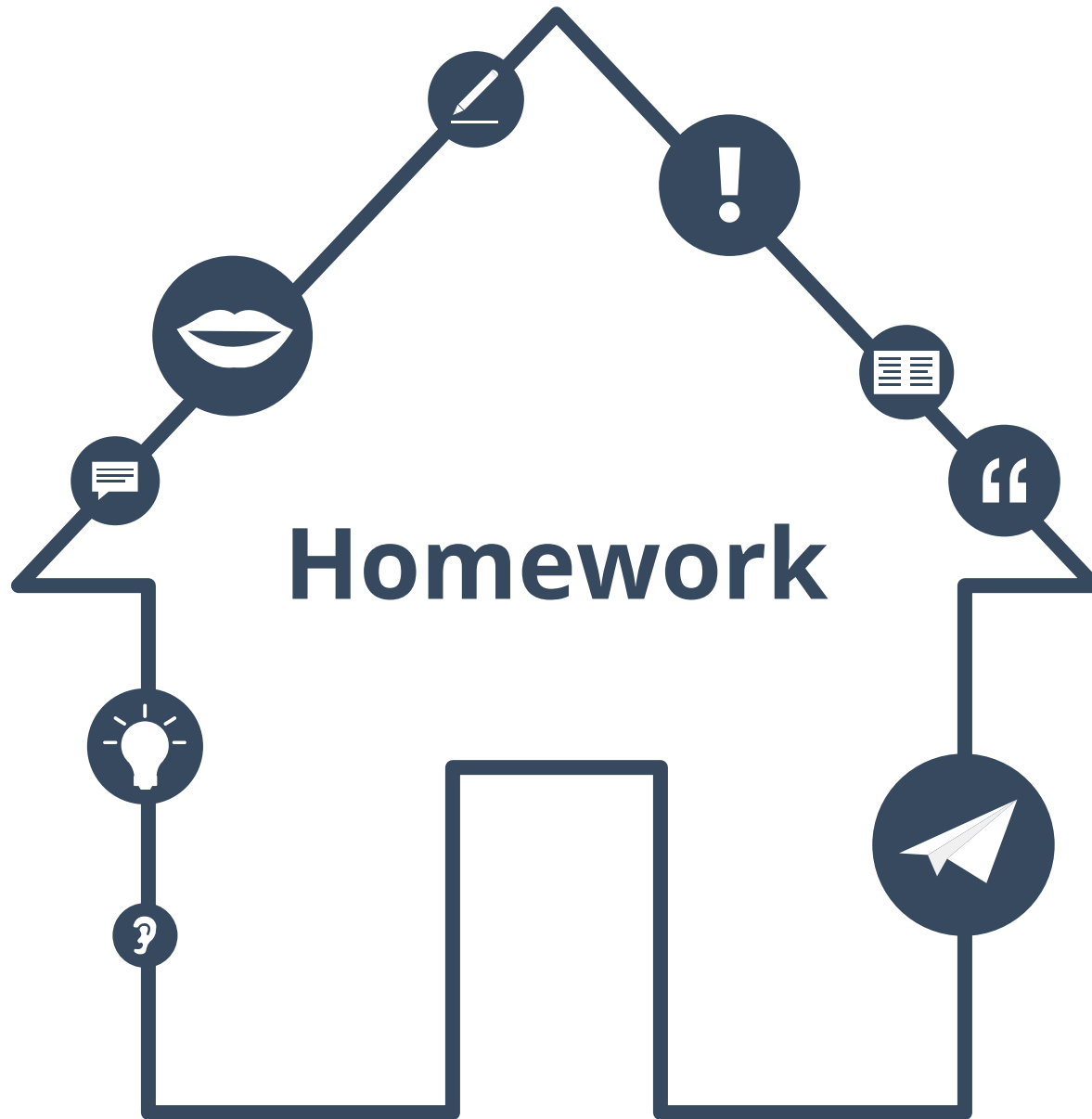
If you have time, go over
the most difficult slides again



Answer key

Slide 22

1. Thoughts
2. Coming, afraid
3. Agree, opinion
4. Ask, agree, think
5. To an extent, would
6. Mean, elaborate/expand





Fill in the gaps with the correct form of the words on the right-hand column.

1. Effective critical thinking is _____-free.
2. This idea is _____ impossible. You need to try and be more realistic.
3. I have a _____ that this is a bad business decision.
4. In order to fully understand our market and come up with a good business plan, we need to carry out a marketing _____.
5. It's too soon to be making these kind of decisions. Let's wait until we have a clearer idea of the market and then re-_____ our options.
6. When we think _____, we set aside our personal opinions.

gut feeling

objectivity

assumption

analysis

logic

evaluation



Email writing activity

Write an email to a friend explaining the importance of critical thinking in the workplace.

<div>- □ ×</div>		
To:		
Subject: critical thinking		
<div></div>		



Answer key

Slide 27

1. Assumption
2. Logically
3. Gut-feeling
4. Analysis
5. Evaluate
6. Objectively



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