

Lecture 3

Classroom communications

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Alliance with  Education

- I. The role of classroom communications
- II. Listen actively
- III. Ask questions in class
- IV. Guidelines for participating in class
- V. Communicating with your instructors/lecturers, classmates, school mates, and people younger than you
- VI. Concentration skills
- VII. Critical thinking

I. The role of classroom communications

- Today's college students learn from a multiple number of sources. While **lecturing** is a primary classroom strategy, college professors are paying more and more attention to the use of **cooperative learning** as a way of strengthening student learning. Research recognizes that students learn from each other and that their success depends on their skill at **effective communication**.
- **Poor communication** is the main reason why students lack motivation, perform badly and consequently dropout of school (Hanifan, 2019).



II. Listen actively

- Active listening is opposite to passive listening.



- Watch this video to see two examples on passive and active listening:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_dAkDsBQyk

II. Listen actively (cont.)

Principles of active listening:

- **Focus** on what is being said. Give the speaker your undivided attention. Clear your mind of anything else.
- **Don't prejudge** or assume you already know the material. You want to understand what the person is saying; you don't need to agree with it.
- **Repeat what you just heard:** confirm with the speaker that what you heard is what he or she said.
- **Ask the speaker to expand or clarify:** If you are unsure you understand, ask questions; don't assume.
- Listen for **verbal cues** and watch for **nonverbal cues**.
- **Listen for requests:** A speaker will often hide a request as a statement of a problem. If a friend says, "I hate math!" this may mean, "Can you help me figure out a solution to this problem?"

II. Listen actively (cont.)

Activity 1: Active listening role play

- Determine a **real-life student situation** with a specific discussion topic. (E.g. a conversation between a student and a librarian to extend a book borrowing; a chit chat between friends on the plans for upcoming weekend, etc.)
- **Assign the roles** to you and your learning companion(s)
- **Practice** active listening for 3-5 mins
- **Make reflections** on your practice
(what you and your companion have done well/not very well based on the list of active listening principles)



III. Ask questions in class

- Are you **shy** about asking questions?
Do you think that others in the class will ridicule you for asking a **dumb question**?
- Students sometimes feel this way because they have never been **taught how to ask questions**.
- **Practice these steps**, and soon you will be on your way to customizing each course to meet **your needs** and letting the instructor know you value the course.



III. Ask questions in class (cont.)

Tips for asking questions in class properly and effectively:

- **Be prepared.** Doing your assignments for a class or lecture will give you a good idea about the areas you are having trouble with and will help you frame some questions ahead of time.
- **Position yourself for success.** Sit near the front of the class. It will be easier for you to make eye contact with the instructor as you ask the question. Also, you won't be intimidated by a class full of heads turning to stare at you as you ask your question.
- **Don't wait.** Ask your questions as soon as the instructor has finished a thought. Being one of the first students to ask a question also will ensure that your question is given the time it deserves and won't be cut short by the end of class.

III. Ask questions in class (cont.)

- **In a lecture class, write your questions down.** Make sure you jot your questions down as they occur to you. Some may be answered in the course of the lecture, but if the instructor asks you to hold your questions until the end of class, you'll be glad you have a list of the items you need the instructor to clarify or expand on.
- **Ask specific questions.** "I don't understand" is a statement, not a question. Give the instructor guidance about what you are having trouble with. If you ask your question at the end of class, give the instructor some context for your question by referring to the part of the lecture that triggered the question. E.g. "Professor, you said the Union troops were emboldened by Lincoln's leadership. Was this throughout the Civil War, or only after Gettysburg?"
- **Don't ask questions for the sake of asking questions.** If your question is not thought out, or if it appears that you are asking the question to try to look smart, instructors will see right through you!

IV. Guidelines for participating in class

Participation has these advantages:

- Helps you concentrate and focus.
- Helps you sort out what you know and don't know.
- Helps you prepare for exams and quizzes.
- Gives you practice speaking before groups.
- Teaches you the etiquette of participation, which helps you contribute more effectively in academic and nonacademic settings.

IV. Guidelines for participating in class (cont.)

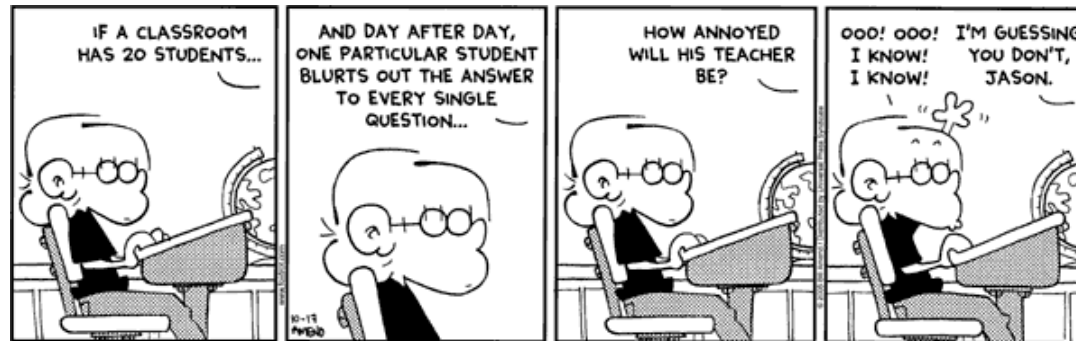
Guidelines for effective class participation:

- Set yourself up for success by coming to class fully prepared.
- Sit in the front with a good view of the instructor, board or screen, and other visual aids.
- Remember that your body language communicates as much as anything you say.
- Pay attention to the instructor's body language, which can communicate much more than just his or her words.
- Take good notes, but don't write obsessively—and never page through your textbook (or browse on a laptop).
- Don't eat or play with your cell phone.

IV. Guidelines for participating in class (cont.)

Guidelines for effective class participation:

- Except when writing brief notes, keep your eyes on the instructor.
- Follow class protocol for making comments and asking questions

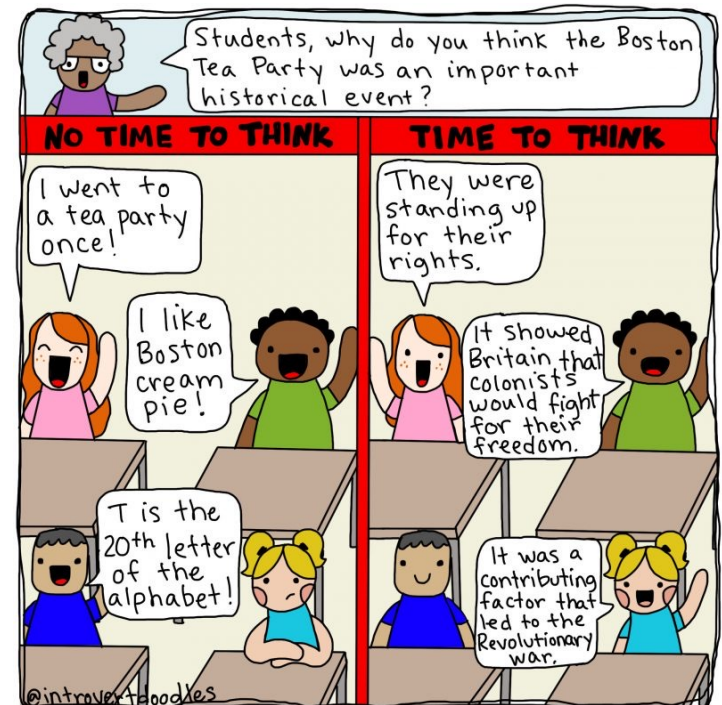


- Don't say or ask anything just to try to impress your instructor.
- Pay attention to the instructor's thinking style.
- It's fine to disagree with your instructor when you ask or answer a question.
- Pay attention to your communication style.

V. Communicating with your instructors

When your instructor asks a question to the class:

- Raise your hand and make eye contact, but don't call out or wave your hand all around trying to catch his or her attention.
- For an online class or meeting, click on "Raise hand" button to ask for permission before talking.
- Before speaking, take a moment to gather your thoughts and take a deep breath. Don't just blurt it out—speak calmly and clearly.



V. Communicating with your instructors (cont.)

When your instructor asks you a question directly:

- Be honest and admit it if you don't know the answer or are not sure. Don't try to fake it or make excuses.
- With a question that involves a reasoned opinion more than a fact, it's fine to explain why you haven't decided yet, such as when weighing two opposing ideas or actions; your comment may stimulate further discussion.
- Organize your thoughts to give a sufficient answer. Instructors seldom want a yes or no answer. Give your answer and provide reasons or evidence in support.



V. Communicating with your instructors (cont.)

When you want to ask the instructor a question:

- Don't ever feel a question is "stupid".
- Ask at the appropriate time. Don't interrupt the instructor or jump ahead and ask a question about something the instructor may be starting to explain
- Don't ask just because you weren't paying attention.
- Don't ask a question that is really a complaint.
- Avoid dominating a discussion. It may be appropriate in some cases to make a follow-up comment after the instructor answers your question, but don't try to turn the class into a one-on-one conversation between you and the instructor.



V. Communicating with your instructors (cont.)

What to Do If...

- **Your instructor speaks too fast.** Crank up your preparation. The more you know about the subject, the more you'll be able to pick up from the instructor. Exchange class notes with other students to fill in gaps in notes. You might ask the instructor—very politely, of course—to slow down, but habits like speaking fast are hard to break!
- **Your instructor has a heavy accent.** Sit as close to the instructor as possible. Make connections between what the instructor seems to be saying and what he or she is presenting on the board or screen. Ask questions when you don't understand. The more you speak with the instructor the more likely you will learn to understand the accent.
- **Your instructor speaks softly or mumbles.** Sit as close to the instructor as possible and try to hold eye contact as much as possible. Check with other students if they are having problems listening, too; if so, you may want to bring the issue up with the instructor. It may be that the instructor is not used to the lecture hall your class is held in and can easily make adjustments.

V. Communicating with your instructors and classmates (cont.)

Communication with Respect:

- *What?* Thorne, et al. (2004) defined it as
 - “the expression of regard for a specific individual”
 - manifested in listening, recognition of contributing value, awareness of social context, expressing empathy and offering information (p. 301).
- *With whom?* Respectful behaviors reflected in communicating with others, including instructors, adults, classmates, school mates, and people younger than you

V. Communicating with your instructors and classmates (cont.)

Effective behaviours – do you...?

Ineffective behaviours – do you...?

Communication

- Communicate regularly with colleagues at all levels.
- Proactively share appropriate information and encourage others to do so.
- Use communication styles appropriate to your audience.
- Encourage two way communication.
- Use inclusive and appropriate language.
- Present information to promote understanding.
- Listen and ask questions in order to understand.
- Consider the communications systems and methods you use to be accessible.
- Ensure that individuals who are remote working have effective and responsive communication channels

- React defensively to feedback.
- Use jargon inappropriate to the audience.
- Interrupt.
- Talk or write at inappropriate length.
- 'Guard' information.
- Not credit others for their work.
- Refuse to acknowledge the point of view of others.

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR FRAMEWORK

RDM (2021) *Respectful behaviours framework*, Radcliffe Department of Medicine.
Available at: <https://www.rdm.ox.ac.uk/intranet/personnel/respectful-behaviours-framework> (Accessed: December 16, 2022).

V. Communicating with your instructors and classmates (cont.)

Search and watch a clip about being respectful in communication under the context of classroom, such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3XX12easrg> and applying the above respectful behavior framework, discussing in small groups about appropriate behaviors, practices when communicating with:

- Instructors/lecturers
- adults
- classmates
- school mates
- people younger than you

VI. Concentration skills

1. Test yourself
2. What's concentration?
3. Causes of poor concentration
4. Strategies for concentration in class
5. Benefits of improved concentration

1. Test yourself

Activity 2:

- Complete the online concentration & focus skills test. This concentration test will assess how well you are able to focus on a task and whether you have a well-developed repertoire of strategies to apply yourself when you really need to.
- Link for the test:
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/tests/career/concentration-focus-skills-test>
- Share your results with your learning companion.

Psychology Today Find a Therapist ▾ Get Help ▾ Magazine ▾

Concentration & Focus Skills Test

21 questions

PROGRESS STATUS:

	Quite Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never
1. My mind tends to drift away when I'm working on something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I find irrelevant information or thoughts popping into my head when I'm trying to focus on a task.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I employ motivational techniques (e.g. rewards, envisioning how I will feel when the task is complete) to get me through boring or difficult tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. When I really need to concentrate, I can tune out my environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I arrange my schedule so that I can work on tasks that require the most concentration during the time of day when I am most alert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. When I begin a task, I set specific objectives for what I want to accomplish.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. What is concentration?

- **Concentration** is focusing your attention on what you're doing.
- Examples of what **ISN'T** concentration:
 - If you're reading a chapter in your Academic English text, you're concentrating on it only as long as you're thinking of nothing else. As soon as you think about how many pages you have left to read, what time you're going to eat dinner, or what the professor will discuss in class, you're experiencing a lack of concentration. If you think about the fact that you *should* be concentrating on the assignment, that means you've in fact lost your concentration.
 - If, during a lecture class, you become interested in the conversation going on in the row behind you, you've lost your concentration. You may even find that you've missed several new points that your professor just introduced.

2. What is concentration?

- Three levels of concentration

- a. Light concentration
- b. Moderate concentration
- c. Deep concentration

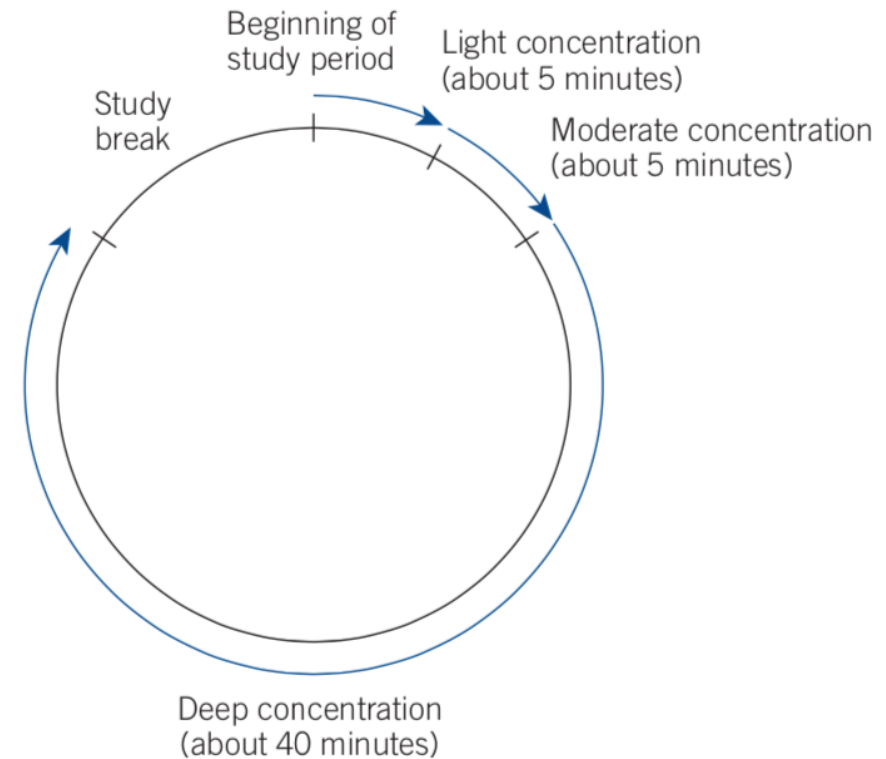


Figure 6.1: Concentration Cycle (Course book 1, p.189)

a. Light concentration

- **Timing:** When you first sit down to read or study, you're in a state of light concentration. At this point, you're just getting settled into your reading, listening, or studying.
 - **Duration of this stage:** first five minutes of study.
 - **Behaviors:** wiggling around in their chairs, twisting their hair, or pulling out study supplies, etc.
 - **Limitations:** can be easily distracted. You may hear people talking down the hall, notice other students walking into the room, be annoyed by any noise occurring around you, or find yourself thinking about other things.
- You don't accomplish much during this stage, and very little learning actually occurs.

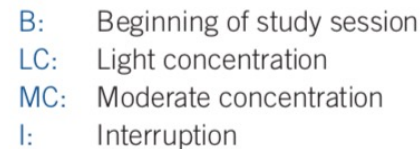
b. Moderate concentration

- **Timing:** After the first 5 mins, you begin to pay attention to the material that you're reading, hearing, or studying.
 - **Duration of this stage:** next five minutes or so.
 - **Behaviors:** You may find that you're actually getting interested in the lecture or text material. In this stage you'll probably find that you are not as easily distracted.
 - **Limitations:** Although you may lose your concentration if someone talks directly to you, you may not notice the voices of people talking down the hall or even someone coughing in the same room. Some learning occurs in this stage.
- Some learning occurs in this stage.

c. Deep concentration

- **Timing:** After the first 10 mins or so, you begin to pay attention to the material that you're reading, hearing, or studying.
 - **Duration of this stage:** no definite answer! It depends on each learner and external environment.
 - **Behaviors:** you are totally engrossed in your work— you aren't thinking about anything except what you are hearing, writing, or reading. When you're in deep concentration, you're not aware of the clock ticking, the door opening, or the things that you normally would find rather distracting.
 - **Limitations:** Some students lose track of time when they're in deep concentration, so be sure to set an alarm if you need to be somewhere at a particular time. It's at this stage in the concentration cycle that you're working most effectively and have the highest level of comprehension.
- You learn the most and can complete more work in less time in deep concentration.

A. The Ideal Study Session: Good Concentration



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3. Causes of poor concentration

The real causes of most concentration problems are:

- a. Lack of attention
- b. Lack of interest
- c. Lack of motivation

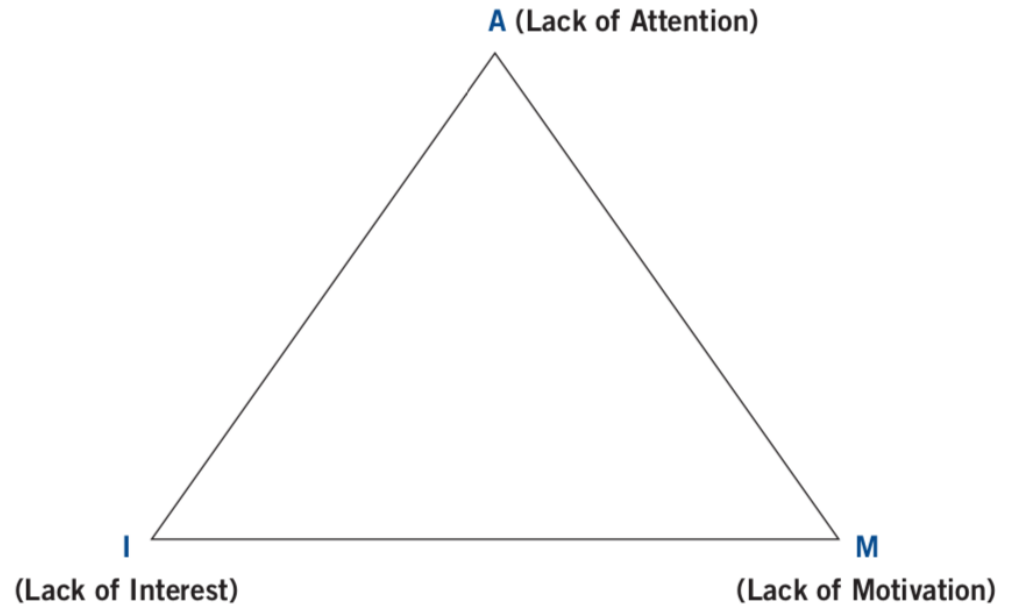


Figure 6.3: Study session & levels of concentration (Course book 1, p.193)

a. Lack of attention

Lack of attention is caused by distractions (i.e. anything that diverts your focus/attention from the task at hand).

- **External distractions** include things like noise, an uncomfortable study area, and, of course, other people.
- **Internal distractions** are things that you think about or worry about. Common internal distractions are anxiety caused by a certain course, the feeling that study won't help, worry over personal problems, indecision about what to do next, and so on. Many students even worry about the fact that they can't concentrate, and *that* worry interferes further with their ability to concentrate on their work.

b. Lack of interest

Without a high level of interest, it's easy to lose concentration, especially when you're surrounded by distractions.

- You've probably already found that it's easy to concentrate when you're interested in what you're doing.
- Do you find that you can concentrate well in some lecture classes but not in others?
- Is it easy to stay involved in your reading in some texts but not in others? If you answered yes to either of these questions, your level of interest in the course or in the material may be the reason for your concentration success in one course and difficulty in the other.

c. Lack of motivation

Lack of motivation is another cause of poor concentration.

- If you really don't care about getting a college degree, it's hard to go to class, read your text assignments, take lecture notes, and prepare for exams.
- If you don't see the relevance of the course or the assignment, it's hard to exert the effort to do it well. If you don't really care about making the grade, it's going to be very difficult to concentrate on your work.
- If you ever find yourself asking, "Why am I even trying to do this assignment?" "Why am I sitting in this class?" or "Why am I in college?" you may have a motivation problem.

→ To improve your ability to concentrate, you need to be motivated to succeed.

Identify concentration problems

- Make a list of concentration problems that you have when having lecture class and when you are working on your assignment.
- Consider the underlying cause of your concentration problem and label it as A (attention), I (interest), or M (motivation). What was the most common cause of your concentration problems?



4. Strategies for concentration in class

- Taking notes during lecture classes helps you focus on what the professor is saying. If you know that you're going to have to write something, you'll be more motivated to pay attention.
 - Asking and answering questions, predicting what the professor will say next, and taking notes are all ways of becoming more involved during lecture classes.
 - You may also find that you can increase your concentration in lecture classes by sitting directly in your professor's line of vision. You're more likely to pay attention if you feel as if you're on the spot. It's pretty hard to fall asleep or look out the window when your professor is standing right in front of you. If you focus your attention on the professor and keep him or her directly in your line of vision, you'll be able to block out distractions more easily, too.
- ☞ For more strategies to improve concentration for reading text assignments and test preparation, please read Chapter 6 in coursebook.

5. Benefits of improved concentration

There are many benefits to improved concentration.

- Be able to **make better use of your time**.
 - Get more done during a study session.
 - Gain a better understanding of what you have read
 - Improved concentration during lecture classes can help you take better lecture notes. In addition, you may find that you become more involved in the lecture and gain a better understanding of the material.
- You'll be able to form connections between the material being presented and the material you already know. This helps you learn and **understand what you're hearing**.
- After concentrating on your studies for one or two hours, you'll be pleased by what you were able to accomplish. You may even experience increased **self-confidence** and **higher self-esteem**.

VII. Critical thinking

1. What is critical thinking?
2. Steps of critical thinking
3. Why are critical thinking skills important?
4. Top critical thinking skills
5. Simple strategies to improve critical thinking skills

1. What is critical thinking?

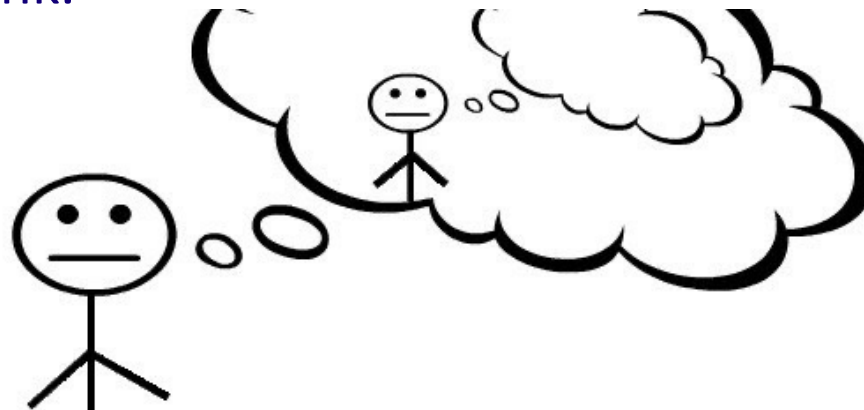
Activity 4: Solve these brain teasers to test your critical thinking

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2eINl4WXkc>



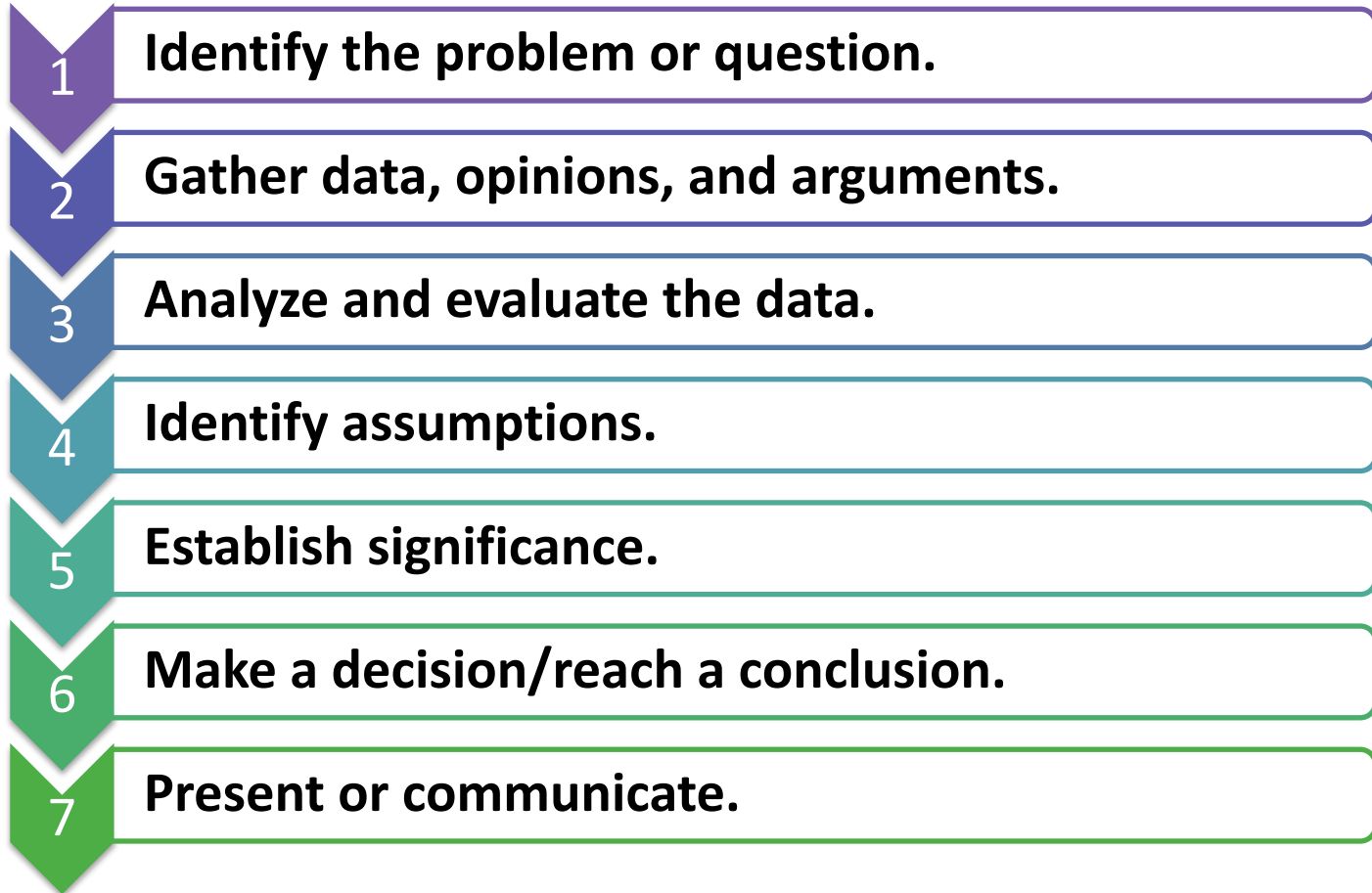
1. What is critical thinking? (cont.)

- *Critical thinking* is the ability to think in an organized and rational manner in order to understand connections between ideas and/or facts.
- It helps you decide what to believe in. In other words, it's "thinking about thinking"—identifying, analyzing, and then fixing flaws in the way we think.



- This skill is crucial and closely linked to effective study at college.

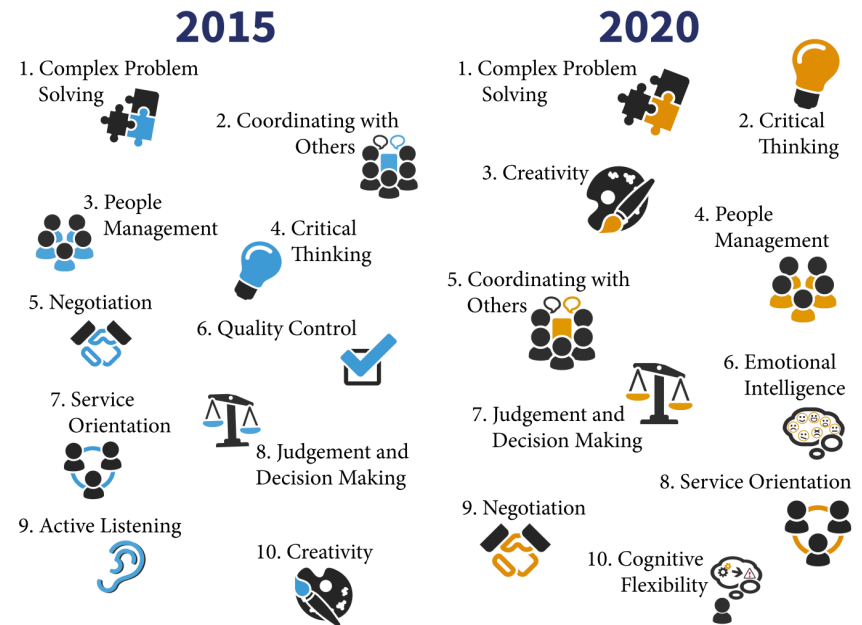
2. Steps of critical thinking



3. Why are critical thinking skills important?

- When you think critically, you'll constantly challenge what seems given → help you try and identify **new, better solutions**.
- It helps you **make hard decisions**.
- You can **avoid being manipulated** by others.
- Critical thinking skills are the cornerstone of **self-development** and **improvement**. That's why they're so critical to have in today's job market.
- A recent report* (link in the note) by the AACU revealed that **93% of employers value critical thinking** over the candidate's undergraduate degree.

(SOURCE: FUTURE OF JOBS REPORT, WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM)
TOP 10 SKILLS IMPORTANT IN THE WORKFORCE



4. Top critical thinking skills

- **Analysis:** the ability to collect and process information and knowledge.
- **Interpretation:** concluding what the meaning of processed information is.
- **Inference:** assessing whether the knowledge you have is sufficient and reliable.
- **Evaluation:** the ability to make decisions based on the available information.
- **Explanation:** communicating your findings and reasoning clearly.
- **Self-Regulation:** the drive to constantly monitor and correct your ways of thinking.
- **Open-Mindedness:** taking into account other possibilities and points of view.
- **Problem-Solving:** the ability to tackle unexpected problems and resolve conflicts.

5. Simple strategies to improve critical thinking skills

"Thinking is skilled work. It is not true that we are naturally endowed with the ability to think clearly and logically – without learning how, or without practicing."

– A.E. Mander

The followings are 7 simple ways to help you to get started to think more critically!

5. Simple strategies to improve critical thinking skills (cont.)

1. Ask basic questions

Here are a few key basic question you can ask when approaching any problem:

- What do you already know?
- How do you know that?
- What are you trying to prove, disprove, demonstrated, critique, etc.?
- What are you overlooking?

2. Question Basic Assumptions

3. Be Aware of Your Mental.

- A critical thinker is aware of their cognitive biases and personal prejudices and how they influence seemingly “objective” decisions and solutions.
- All of us have biases in our thinking. Becoming aware of them is what makes critical thinking possible.

5. Simple strategies to improve critical thinking skills (cont.)

4. Try Reversing Things

It may seem obvious that X causes Y, but what if Y caused X?

5. Evaluate the Existing Evidence

Ask the following questions of any evidence you encounter:

- Who gathered this evidence?
- How did they gather it?
- Why?

6. Remember to Think for Yourself

Don't get so bogged down in research and reading that you forget to think for yourself, develop your own thoughts on the matter!

7. Understand That No One Thinks Critically 100% of the Time

Critical thinking is a tool that you should deploy when you need to make important decisions or solve difficult problems, but you don't need to think critically about everything.

- Chapter 6: 'Improving Concentration'

Coursebook 1: Blerkom, D. (2009), *College Study Skills: Becoming a Strategic Learner*, 6th ed, Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

- Online sources

- Lumen Learning (2020), *Chapter 10: Active Listening in the Classroom*, Lumen Learning, viewed 10 November 2020, <<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/austincc-learningframeworks/chapter/chapter-10-active-listening-in-the-classroom/>>
- Tomaszewski, M. (2020), *Critical Thinking Skills: Definition, Examples & How to Improve*, Zety, viewed 11 November 2020. <<https://zety.com/blog/critical-thinking-skills>>.

- Homework: Assessment activity 2:
 - Complete the *Strategies for improving concentration worksheet* (separate Word file in Lecture 3's folder), which requires you to:
 - Identify different concentration problems (at least 5 for each task) you may have when attending lecture, working on your assignment and preparing for exams.
 - Classify the concentration problems into A, I or M types.
 - Provide practical solutions for each concentration problems.
 - Submit your works (as PDF files) to CMS in the next session for assessment. You can use English or Vietnamese to complete your works.
 - The assessment criteria:
 - Contents of each category of task: 3/10 in which
 - At least 3 concentration problems have been identified: 1/10
 - Correct classification of each problem into A/I/M type: 1/10
 - Rational solutions provided: 1/10
 - Presentation/language use: 1/10