

The Miniature Guide
to
**Critical Thinking
for Children**



(to help
you think
better and
better)

By Fairminded Fran (And Linda Elder)

Hi! I'm Fairminded Fran.

I am good at thinking. I am good because I practice. I will show you how!

When I am confused, I ask questions. I try to be clear.

When something doesn't make sense to me, I ask questions. I try to figure things out.

I think for myself. I don't ask anyone to think for me.

I wrote this little book to help you get better at thinking too.

I have put a powerful idea on every page to help you be a better thinker.

To be good at thinking you have to:

- 1) decide that you want to be good at thinking.
- 2) practice using the ideas in this book everyday.

Critical thinkers think about their thinking. They look for problems in their thinking. They practice thinking just like players practice basketball or baseball.

I hope you decide to be a critical thinker. If you do, you'll learn a lot, and enjoy it too.

Good luck!

Fairminded

Fran

P.S. By the way, you will probably need help learning some of the ideas in this mini-guide. Your teacher can help you learn them by giving you activities to do and examples of how to use them.

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There are three kinds of thinkers



Naïve
Nancy

She
doesn't
care
about
her
thinking



Selfish
Sam

He's
good at
thinking.
But he's
not fair to
others.



Fair
Minded
Fran

She's
good at
thinking.
And
she's fair
to others.

Naïve Nancy

"I don't need to think! I understand everything without thinking. I just do whatever occurs to me to do. I believe most of what I hear. I believe most of what I see on TV. I don't see why I should question either. And I don't need to waste a lot of time trying to figure things out. Why should I, when someone will figure things out for me if I wait



long enough? It's a lot easier to say 'I can't!' than to do a lot of work. My parents and my teachers take care of me when I can't take care of myself. The other day I was having trouble with my math homework and started to cry, so my father did it for me. My parents give me a lot of help. It's easier that way. I do what I'm told, keep my mouth shut, and go along with whatever my friends decide. I don't like to make waves. Thinking gets you into trouble."



Selfish Sam

"I think a lot! It helps me trick people and get what I want. I believe whatever I want to believe, whatever gets me what I want. I question anyone who asks me to do what I don't want to do. I figure out how to get around my parents. I figure out how to get other kids to do what I want them to do. I even

figure out how to avoid thinking if I want. Sometimes I say 'I can't!' when I know I could but don't want to. You can get what you want from people if you know how to manipulate them. Just the other night, I got to stay up till 11:00 by arguing with my mother about bedtime! It helps to tell people what they want to hear. Of course, sometimes what they want to hear isn't true, but that doesn't matter because you only get into trouble when you tell people what they don't want to hear. You can always trick people if you know how. Guess what, you can even trick yourself if you know how."

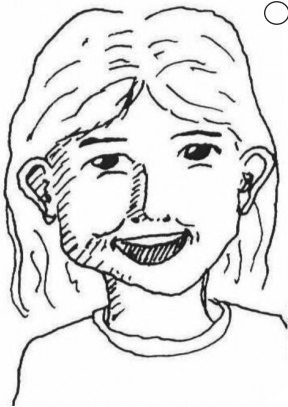
Fairminded Fran

"I think a lot. It helps me to learn. It helps me to figure things out. I want to understand my parents and my playmates. In fact, I even want to understand myself and why I do things. Sometimes I do things that I don't understand. It's not easy trying to understand everyone and everything. Lots of people say one thing and do another. You can't always believe what people say. You can't believe a lot of what you see on TV. People often say things not because they mean them but because they want things and are trying to please you. I would like to make the world a better place. I want to make it better for everyone, not just for me and my friends. To understand other people you have to look at things as they do. You have to understand their situation and what you would feel like if you were them. You have to put yourself in their shoes. The other night I got mad at my sister because she wanted to watch a TV program that was on at the same time my favorite show was on. I didn't want to let her until I realized that she needed to watch her program to do some homework for school. I knew then that it wouldn't be fair of me to insist on my show, since she did have to do her homework for school. It isn't easy to be fair. It's a lot easier to be selfish and just think about yourself. But if I don't think about others, why should they think about me? I want to be fair to others because I expect everyone to be fair to me."



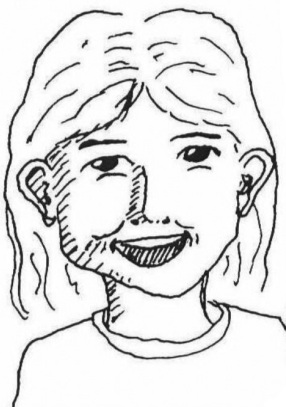
Critical Thinkers Seek Better Ways of Doing Things

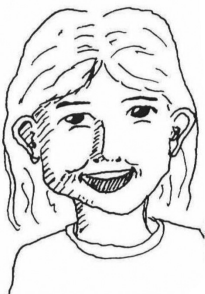
There's
always a
better way and
I can find it.



Critical Thinkers Believe in The Power of Their Minds

I can figure
out anything I
need to
figure out.





I use intellectual standards to think better. Here are some of the most important ones.

Be clear! - Can you state what you mean? Can you give examples?

Be accurate! - Are you sure it's true?

Be relevant! - Is it related to what we are thinking about?

Be logical! - Does it all fit together?

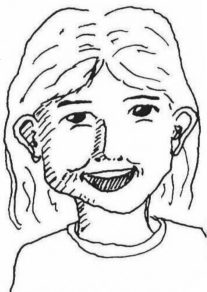
Be fair! - Did you consider how your behavior will make others feel?

Be Clear

(Don't confuse people.)

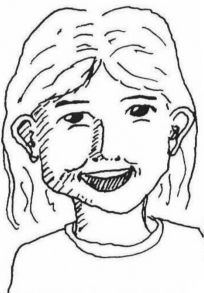
We are confused when we are not clear. We are clear when we understand:

- **what we are saying,**
- **what we are hearing, or**
- **what we are reading.**



Things you can say and questions you can ask when you want to be clear:

- Let me tell you what I mean. Let me give you an example.
- Could you tell me what you mean?
- Could you say that in other words?
- I'm confused. Could you explain what you mean?
- Let me tell you what I think you said. Tell me if I'm right.



Be Accurate

(Make sure it's true.)

When we say what is true or correct we are accurate.

When we aren't sure whether something is true, we check to see if it is.

Questions you can ask to make sure you are accurate:

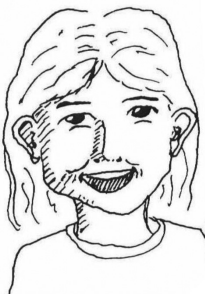
- "How could we find out if this is really true?"
- "How can we check this?"
- "How could we test this idea to see if it is true?"
- "How do you know what you are saying is true?"

Be Relevant

(Make sure you stay on track.)

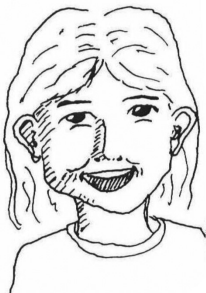
Something is relevant when it relates directly to:

- The problem you are trying to solve
- The question you are trying to answer
- Whatever you are talking about or writing about



Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is relevant:

- How does what you say relate to the problem?
- How does this information relate to the question we are asking?
- What will help us solve the problem?
- How does what you say relate to what we are talking about?



Be Logical

(Make sure everything fits together.)

Thinking is logical when everything fits together.

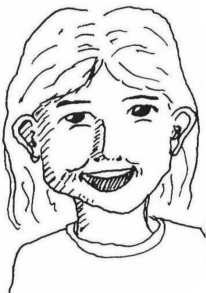
You can ask these questions when you are not sure whether something is logical:

- This doesn't make sense to me. Can you show me how it all fits together?
- The sentences in this paragraph don't seem to belong together. How can I rewrite it so that the sentences all fit together better?
- What you are saying doesn't sound logical. How did you come to your conclusions? Explain why this makes sense to you.

Be Fair

(Make sure you consider others.)

When we consider the feelings of others before we do something, we are being fair.

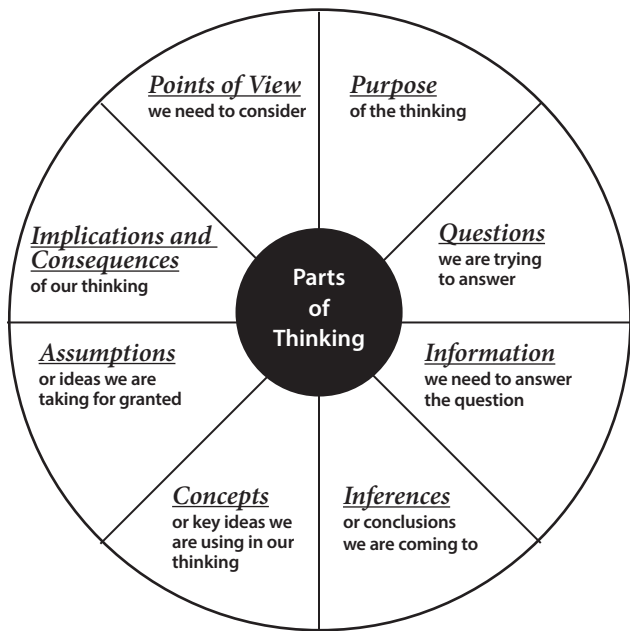


You can ask these questions when you are not sure whether you, or someone else, is being fair:

- Am I being selfish right now?
- Is he or she being selfish right now?
- Am I considering the thinking of others?
- Am I considering the feelings of others?
- Am I giving him what he deserves?

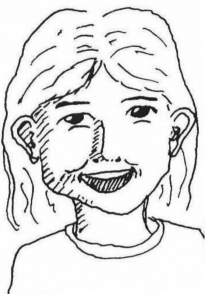
We take our thinking apart to find problems in our thinking—and fix them.

Here are the parts:



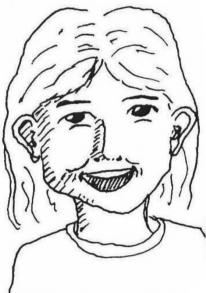
Think About the Purpose

Your purpose is your goal, or what you are trying to make happen.



Questions you can ask to target purpose:

- What is your purpose in doing what you are doing?
- What is my purpose in doing what I am doing?
- What is our purpose?
- What is the purpose of this assignment?
- What is the purpose of the main character in this story?
- What is my teacher's purpose?
- What is my sister's purpose?
- What is my brother's purpose?
- Is there something wrong with my purpose?



State the Question

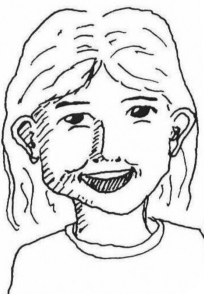
The question lays out the problem and guides our thinking.

Questions you can ask about the question:

- What question am I trying to answer?
- What is the question we are trying to answer in this activity?
- Is my question clear?
- Should I be asking a different question?
- What question are you asking me?

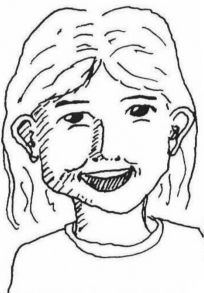
Gather the Information

The information is the facts, evidence or experiences you use to figure things out.



Questions you can ask about information:

- What information do I need to answer this question?
- Do I need to gather more information?
- Is this information relevant to my purpose?
- Is my information accurate?



Watch your Inferences

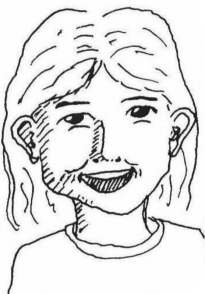
Inferences are conclusions you come to. It's what the mind does in figuring something out.

Questions you can ask to check your inferences:

- What conclusions am I coming to?
- Are there other conclusions I should consider?
- Is my inference logical?
- Is this other person's inference logical?

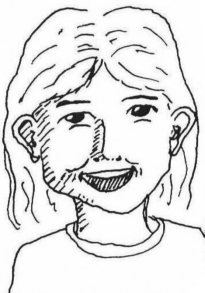
Check Your Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted. Usually you don't question them, but you should.



Questions you can ask about assumptions:

- What am I taking for granted?
- Am I assuming something I shouldn't?
- What assumption is leading me to this conclusion?
- What is this other person assuming?
- What does my mother assume about my friends?
- Are you assuming that boys are always stronger than girls?



Clarify Your Concepts

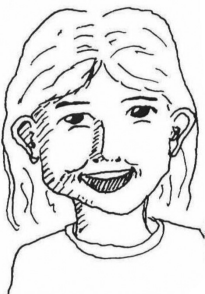
Concepts are ideas you use in thinking to understand what is going on.

Questions you can ask to clarify concepts:

- What is the main idea in this story?
- What idea comes into my mind when I hear the word _____?
- What idea is this character using in his or her thinking? Is there a problem with this idea?
- What idea am I using in my thinking? Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
- I think this is a good idea but could you explain it a little more?

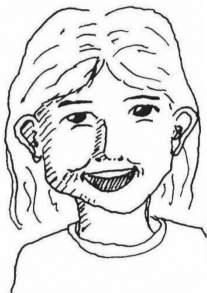
Understand Your Point of View

Point of View is what you are looking at and the way you are seeing it.



Questions you can ask about point of view:

- How am I looking at this situation?
- What am I looking at? And how am I seeing it?
- Is there another reasonable way to look at the situation? Or is my view the only reasonable view?
- Are you looking at girls as sissies?
- Are you looking at boys as tough?



Think Through the Implications

Implications are the things that might happen if you decide to do something.

Consequences are the things that do happen when you act.

Questions you can ask about implications:

- If I decide to do “X,” what things might happen?
- If I decide not to do “X,” what things might happen?
- When the main character in the story made an important decision, what happened as a result? What were the consequences?
- What are the possible implications of riding your bike too fast down the hill?
- What are the implications of touching that hot pot on the stove?

I work on my thinking every day because I want to develop **intellectual virtues**. What are intellectual virtues? Let's think about each word by itself. *Intellectual* means working hard in your mind to think and learn well. *Virtues* are good qualities a person has. So when we have intellectual virtues we have **qualities of mind that help us think and learn well.**



I work hard to develop intellectual virtues in my mind. I have explained some of them in my own words:

Intellectual Integrity

I try to be the kind of person I expect others to be. Because I expect others to respect me, I respect them. Because I expect others to consider my feelings, I consider their feelings. Because I expect others not to be rude, I am not rude to them.

Intellectual Independence

I try to do my own thinking, to figure things out for myself. It's good to listen to others to find out what they are thinking, but I must always do my own thinking to decide who and what to believe.

Intellectual Perseverance

Sticking to a problem is always better than giving up. When my mind tells me that I can't learn something, I tell my mind I can. When reading is hard, I stick to it so I can learn to read better. When writing is hard, I keep trying so I can learn to write better. I am not afraid to work hard in my mind.

Intellectual Empathy

I try to understand how other people think. Whenever I disagree with people I try to see things the way they do. Then I often find that there are some things I am right about and some things they are right about.

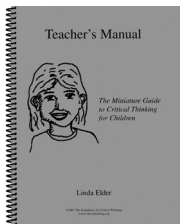
Intellectual Humility

I don't know everything. There is a lot that I don't know. I shouldn't say things are true when I don't really know they are. Lots of things I think may not be true. Lots of things other people tell me might not be true. Some things I read or see on TV are not true. I try always to ask, "How do you know that? How do I know that?"

Intellectual Courage

I should be ready to speak up for what I think is right, even if it is not popular with my friends or the kids I am with. I should be courteous, but I should not be afraid to disagree.

Additional Instructional Resources



This manual provides the conceptual foundations for using the Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking for Children. It also includes instructional strategies and student worksheets that can be used in conjunction with the mini-guide. #541m \$14.95



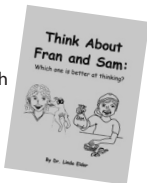
Using these laminated hand-held masks, students will enjoy role-playing Naive Nancy,



Our set of seven classroom posters keep critical thinking at the forefront of teacher and student thinking. Visit our website to view posters. #558s \$18.00

Selfish Sam and Fairminded Fran. These masks enable teachers to focus on the importance of intellectual empathy and fairmindedness in ways meaningful to children. #542p \$13.95

This story about Fair-minded Fran and Selfish Sam helps children explore important concepts like fairness, selfishness, and empathy. #543m \$5.00



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1000-1499 copies	\$1.25 each
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The Foundation for Critical Thinking seeks to promote essential change in education and society through the cultivation of fairminded critical thinking, thinking predisposed toward intellectual empathy, humility, perseverance, integrity, and responsibility. A rich intellectual environment is possible only with critical thinking at the foundation of education. Why? Because only when students learn to think through the content they are learning in a deep and substantive way can they apply what they are learning in their lives. Moreover, in a world of accelerating change, intensifying complexity, and increasing interdependence, critical thinking is now a requirement for economic and social survival. Contact us to learn about our publications, videos, workshops, conferences, and professional development programs.

About the Author



Dr. Linda Elder is an educational psychologist who has taught both psychology and critical thinking at the college level. She is the President of the Foundation for Critical Thinking and the Executive Director of the Center for Critical Thinking. Dr. Elder has a special interest in the relation of thought to emotion, and in the cognitive and affective. She has developed an original theory of the stages of critical thinking development. Dr. Elder has coauthored four books on critical thinking, as well as 24 Thinker's Guides. She has presented workshops to more than 50,000 educators.



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