

To Evaluate Thinking We Must Apply Intellectual Standards to the Elements of Thought

Clarity

Understandable, the meaning can be grasped

Could you elaborate further? Could you give me an example? Could you illustrate what you mean?

Accuracy

Free from errors or distortions, true

How could we check on that? How could we find out if that is true? How could we verify or test that?

Precision

Exact to the necessary level of detail

Could you be more specific? Could you give me more details? Could you be more exact?

Relevance

Relating to the matter at hand

How does that relate to the problem? How does that bear on the question? How does that help us with the issue?

Depth

Containing complexities and multiple interrelationships

What factors make this a difficult problem? What are some of the complexities of this question? What are some of the difficulties we need to deal with?

Breadth

Encompassing multiple viewpoints

Do we need to look at this from another perspective? Do we need to consider another point of view? Do we need to look at this in other ways?

Logic

The parts make sense together, no contradictions

Does all this make sense together? Does your first paragraph fit in with your last? Does what you say follow from the evidence?

Significance

Focusing on the important, not trivial

Is this the most important problem to consider? Is this the central idea to focus on? Which of these facts are most important?

Fairness

Justifiable, not self-serving or one-sided

Do I have any vested interest in this issue? Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?

Excerpted from "The Thinker's Guide to Analytic Thinking", page 6-7.



Criteria for Evaluating Reasoning

1. **Purpose:** What is the purpose of the reasoner? Is the purpose clearly stated or clearly implied? Is it justifiable?
2. **Question:** Is the question at issue well-stated? Is it clear and unbiased? Does the expression of the question do justice to the complexity of the matter at issue? Are the question and purpose directly relevant to each other?
3. **Information:** Does the reasoner cite relevant evidence, experiences, and/or information essential to the issue? Is the information accurate? Does the reasoner address the complexities of the issue?
4. **Concepts:** Does the reasoner clarify key concepts when necessary? Are the concepts used justifiably?
5. **Assumptions:** Does the reasoner show a sensitivity to what he or she is taking for granted or assuming? (Insofar as those assumptions might reasonably be questioned?) Does the reasoner use questionable assumptions without addressing problems which might be inherent in those assumptions?
6. **Inferences:** Does the reasoner develop a line of reasoning explaining well how s/he is arriving at her or his main conclusions?
7. **Point of View:** Does the reasoner show a sensitivity to alternative relevant points of view or lines of reasoning? Does s/he consider and respond to objections framed from other relevant points of view?
8. **Implications:** Does the reasoner show a sensitivity to the implications and consequences of the position s/he is taking?

Altered from "The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools", page 14.

