Become a Better Thinker

Making good decisions, solving problems, and clearly seeing opportunities are all outcomes of effective thinking. Good thinking is empowering—it builds confidence and is part of a healthy, proactive lifestyle. Learning to be a more effective thinker will enable you to truly take charge of your life and make a difference.

This report helps you understand your thinking styles, which are positive habits that contribute to better critical thinking. Knowing your habits helps you become more aware of how you approach problems and opportunities, evaluate information, make decisions, and take action.

In this report, you will learn how you can leverage your preferred styles, and develop your less preferred ones. You will also learn how to use your thinking styles to build critical thinking skills.

Understanding Your Thinking Styles

Thinking styles are behaviors—tendencies or positive habits—that have developed over time. Each style contributes, in different ways, to thinking clearly and being proactive.

A few of the positive qualities associated with each style are presented as a quick point of reference. People typically use a few styles frequently and others less so. As you learn about your most and least preferred styles, you’ll become more aware of your strengths and how to use them, and how to develop your least preferred style.
Your thinking styles are listed in order of preference. The styles at the top of the list are your preferred styles—the ones you use most frequently and comfortably when you are solving problems, making decisions, and thinking through situations. These styles are your strengths. The styles at the bottom of the list are your least preferred styles—the thinking styles that you use less frequently, and probably less comfortably.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Thinking Style</th>
<th>Snapshot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>Analytical people can be described as clear-thinking, orderly and planful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Inquisitive</td>
<td>Inquisitive people can be described as curious, alert, and interested in their surrounding world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Insightful</td>
<td>Insightful people can be described as prudent, humble, and reflective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Systematic</td>
<td>Systematic people can be described as conceptual, process oriented, and intuitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Timely</td>
<td>Timely people can be described as efficient, reliable, and responsive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Truth Seeking</td>
<td>Truth seekers can be described as independent, tough minded, and skeptical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Open-Minded</td>
<td>Open-minded people can be described as intellectually tolerant and fair minded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your Most Preferred Style: Analytical

An Analytical style means that you like to anticipate consequences and identify strengths and weaknesses in plans. You are quick to think about if–then scenarios and how they might play out. You like to study situations and think about pros and cons. If something doesn’t fit in a situation or an important detail is missing, you are likely to notice. You are comfortable studying situations and concentrating on the pieces and how they logically fit together. You are likely to sort through facts and analyze information that is received, rather than just accepting it at face value. Analytical people can be described as clear-thinking, orderly and planful.

How Your Analytical Style Contributes to Effective Thinking

Your results suggest that you

- clarify confusing situations;
- observe details others might miss;
- evaluate and refine plans, identify missing steps;
- carefully evaluate information and methodically weigh alternatives when making decisions; and
- clarify the problem and sort out cause-and-effect when solving problems.

Personal Reflections

Check the behaviors under How Your Analytical Style Contributes to Effective Thinking that you think are most descriptive of you. Where, when, and under what circumstances have you exhibited these behaviors?

Strengths to Leverage

- Plan and manage projects and events.
- Assure quality.
- Engineer or re-engineer processes, practices, places.
- Create order from disorder.
An Inquisitive style means that you are intellectually curious and like to learn new things about the world. You want to know why things work the way they do and are comfortable probing deeply into subjects. You like to learn about a wide variety of topics. For you, information is an opportunity to learn. You have a tolerance for ambiguity and complexity because it gives you an opportunity to figure things out. Inquisitive people can be described as curious, alert, and interested in their surrounding world.

**How Your Inquisitive Style Contributes to Effective Thinking**

Your results suggest that you

- clarify issues or beliefs to more clearly define the goal or purpose;
- identify the root cause of a problem;
- question deeply to unearth assumptions or new perspectives;
- ask how and why questions that help evaluate information or alternatives; and
- tolerate ambiguity, which is particularly helpful in situations that are complicated or not fully defined.

**Personal Reflections**

Check the behaviors under How Your Inquisitive Style Contributes to Effective Thinking that you think are most descriptive of you. Where, when, and under what circumstances have you exhibited these behaviors?
Open-Minded people are typically tolerant of the opinions and viewpoints of others and can put themselves in the position of the other person. They can think of different options, different possibilities, and different conclusions. They are comfortable not rushing to judgment, and prefer to thoughtfully weigh information and alternatives. They tend to avoid extreme positions. They value fair play and like to think things through. Open-minded people can be described as intellectually tolerant and fair minded.

Benefits of an Open-Minded Style

Developing an Open-Minded thinking style can help you

- seek information from people with different views to get a better perspective;
- suspend judgment when evaluating information;
- generate alternative options or solutions;
- empathize with others to promote understanding and a broader perspective; and
- tolerate the opinions and viewpoints of others.

Developing an Open-Minded Style

The key to developing an Open-Minded style is to suspend judgment.

- Practice placing yourself in the position of other people, especially those who are different from you. Focus on them—their nonverbal behavior, how they are thinking, and feeling. Try to understand their behavior, without judging, to broaden your perspective.

- Read literature from different viewpoints (e.g., different political parties or religions) and list the value and drawback of each. Try to analyze without allowing emotions to cloud your analysis. This sharpens your ability to evaluate information.

- When faced with a problem or decision, list at least 10 alternatives—even highly unlikely ones. Learning to generate alternatives enhances creativity and flexibility, and the quality of the decision.

Personal Reflections

Read the development suggestions above and check the ones that seem most useful to you. Where, when, and under what circumstances could you employ these suggestions?
Build Your Five Critical Thinking Skills

The following 5-step model shows the key skills for proficient critical thinking. A comprehensive description is available in the book Now You’re Thinking! To learn more, go to NowURThinking.com.

**5 Steps to Critical Thinking**

1. **Stop and Think**
   Determine what’s going on and what you are trying to accomplish. Take time to reflect and set direction.

2. **Recognize Assumptions**
   Distinguish facts from opinions; check for implicit assumptions. Make sure you are solving the right problem.

3. **Evaluate Information**
   What information is needed? Is it relevant/accurate? Efficiently and objectively process information.

4. **Draw Conclusion**
   Does the conclusion fit the evidence? Achieve my goals? Make sure the conclusion logically follows from the information.

5. **Plan of Action**
   Type of plan needed? Resources needed? Have a plan to implement any decisions.

How Thinking Styles Support Critical Thinking

Thinking styles—positive habits—help people develop these critical thinking skills. Using your most preferred thinking styles will make it easier to develop some of these skills, while others might be more challenging for you to master, given your least preferred style.

**Your Most Preferred Style: Analytical**

**Analytical:** the tendency to notice details and seek clarity contributes to the ability to **Recognize Assumptions** and a preference for methodically organizing information contributes to the ability to **Evaluate Information**.

**Your Second Most Preferred Style: Inquisitive**

**Inquisitive:** the tendency to ask probing questions contributes to the ability to **Recognize Assumptions**, particularly by uncovering unstated assumptions. A curious style also facilitates the ability to **Evaluate Information**, by questioning information relevance and accuracy.

**Your Least Preferred Style: Open-Minded**

**Open-Minded:** the tendency to be empathic and open to other peoples’ views is important when developing the ability to **Recognize Assumptions**, particularly your own assumptions that could hinder your ability to accurately define the situation. Practicing the suggestions for developing an Open-Minded style will serve as a foundation for developing the ability to recognize assumptions.
Next Steps

Critical thinking is all about taking charge of your thinking and owning your life. As you develop your own criteria and standards for analyzing situations, people, problems and opportunities, you are proactively managing your world, and increasing your odds of making a positive difference in it.

As with any personal development program it is important to practice each day to develop your skill. Every day you will face multiple decisions, problems, and opportunities. Pay attention to the styles you use in each situation.

- Is it the best style, given the situation, or are you locked into the same style regardless of the situation? Are you following the five-step model of thinking?
- Which steps come easily for you and which steps are more challenging? Why?

Learn More

Critical thinking is a specialized skill. Everyone thinks, but not everyone uses a disciplined approach or does it equally well. Below are several applied books that will give you a deeper understanding of how to exercise critical thinking, strategic thinking, and good judgment.


A primer on critical thinking that uses an inspiring story as a case study to teach a five-step model of effective thinking. Seven thinking styles that facilitate thinking are introduced and an overview of how feelings, dreams, and thinking combine to guide behavior is offered.


A one-volume library filled with practical ideas and suggestions you can use immediately on the job. An excellent resource when you have to get your team up to speed or want to prepare for the next level in your career. The entire first section, Thought Leadership, is devoted to critical thinking.


An essential tool for executives and aspiring executives that draws from more than 30 years of research and work with executives around the world. It provides business-relevant strategies for improving on-the-job performance and mentoring others. The Thinking and Strategic Management chapters address the critical thinking issues encountered by leaders.


An easy-to-use development tool that features a chapter of actionable tips for each of 67 Leadership Architect® competencies, 19 career stallers and stoppers, and 7 global focus areas. Topics related to critical thinking include strategic skills, making complex decisions, and creating new and different opportunities.