

## **Critical Thinking for Economics Essays & Case Studies**

By now, you must be very familiar with the word '*Critical thinking*' as it has been used extensively in the course of your education. Nevertheless, you might still find yourself wondering; just what exactly is '*Critical Thinking*'?

To be specific, '*Critical Thinking*' is the kind of thinking which seeks to open up and challenge existing knowledge rather than to reproduce it. In other words, as a student, you are to be very reflective in learning and get into the habit of questioning whatever information you are given and at the same time, apply this questioning technique to the work that you produce.

In order to display critical thinking, you need to develop skills in:

- (i) Interpreting – understanding the significance of data and to clarify its meaning
- (ii) Analysing – breaking information down and recombining it in **different** ways
- (iii) Reasoning – creating an argument through logical steps
- (iv) Evaluating – judging the worth, credibility or strength of arguments.

## **Displaying Critical Thinking in Writing**

There are certain strategies that you can adopt in order to ensure that elements of critical thinking are displayed in your writing. To do so, you can start with:

- (a) Selecting aspects of the excerpt or stimulus (eg. Keywords) which are open to question
- (b) Commenting (if possible from both a positive as well as a negative perspective) on the aspect
- (c) Drawing on other sources to back up your comments (knowledge). Remember to state your assumptions or identify assumptions hidden within the argument.
- (d) Coming to a conclusion on the validity of the excerpt or stimulus.

In other words, you are expected to:

- Identify the focus of the question (Purpose)
- Identify your own Point of View
- Consider how you'll persuade other people of your POV
- Find the proof to justify your POV
- Engage in debate (*you'll need balance in your essay!*)
- Structure your argument

## **Displaying Critical Thinking in Analysing Articles**

While 'Critical Thinking' is applied extensively in essay writing, it can be and has to be applied to case studies as well. Two important purposes of reading critically are:

- ❖ To provide evidence to back up or challenge a POV
- ❖ To evaluate the validity and importance of a text/article

Strategies for reading 'Critically':

<b>Ask questions about ...</b>	<b>For Example</b>
Your purpose	Why?
The context of the article	Why written? Where? When? Who? How relevant?
The structure of the text	Do the parts fit together logically? Is there a clear argument presented?
The arguments	Are they fair? Do they leave out any perspectives of certain groups?
The evidence used	Is evidence given to support the POV? Is the evidence from an authority in this field? Is the evidence evaluated from different perspectives?
The language used	Is the language used skewed to present some things more positively than others? Are claims attributed clearly to specific sources?

*Adapted from <http://www.usyd.edu.au/lc>*