

Critical thinking and reading

Critical thinking goes hand-in-hand with being able to read a text critically. This handout explores what we mean by 'critical thinking' and gives you some questions to ask when attempting to read a text critically.

What do we mean by a 'text'?

A text is a piece of work (written, spoken, or filmed) that communicates a message to an audience, and which can be read in a critical way. Examples of texts include, books, journal articles, images, films, and even webpages.

You will encounter many different types of texts during your studies, and it's important that you learn to approach these critically rather than assuming that the information they provide is accurate and true.

What does critical thinking involve?

Critical thinking is a broad term that can refer to multiple actions:

- Recognising and evaluating the evidence of others' arguments
- Considering all sides of an argument – even those we do not agree with
- Constructing your own reasoned argument that is based on evidence
- Identifying underlying assumptions and biases, and challenging these

Use critical thinking in your everyday life. Thinking critically means you are less likely to be a victim of a scam or to believe mis/disinformation in the media. Start to examine sources of information and make a judgement on whether the source and the evidence it provides are credible.

What questions can I ask to read a text critically?

Who	Who created the text? Whose perspective is emphasised in the text? How does the text's creator influence the content?
What	What form does the text take? How does the type of media influence the content? What is the text trying to communicate? What evidence does the text give to support its claims? What is missing?
Why	Why does the text exist? I.e., what is the text's purpose?
Where and when	Where does the text come from? How does the text's industry/country of origin influence the content? When was the text created? How does its date of creation influence the content?

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