tips for critical thinking

1. Know what it means

Critical thinking includes your ability to: identify central issues, make correct inferences from data, deduce conclusions from information or data provided, interpret whether conclusions are warranted on the basis of the data given, and evaluate evidence or authority.

2. Practice!

Thinking about things through a critical lens doesn’t always come easy. Practicing your critical thinking while watching TV or reading the newspaper. Ask yourself if there is enough evidence to support conclusions made? is there any bias? Is the reasoning logical? What is your belief on the topic they are discussing – is it the same, or does it differ and why?

3. Be inquisitive - think about your though process

Be aware of your own beliefs, opinions, and ideas. Know what they are and why they are. University is a time of transition for many students; each unique of course; but you may find that your own beliefs, opinions, and ideas may change throughout your time at CU.

4. Be open-minded

Accepting and understanding others’ views does not make your own unstable/weaker; it makes you wiser. It’s important as an intellectual to challenge your own views regularly by listening and reading what others believe; this way you can re-assess and become stronger in your own views or perhaps take on others’. Regardless of outcome, you become a more knowledgeable person from the experience of learning from others.

5. Let go of the terms “right” and “wrong”

Don’t see things in a simplistic way – try to see all of the possibilities that exist and reasoning for them. If you look for possibilities, you will find them.
Communicate confidently
Be prepared to effectively communicate your views with others, being able to draw on information and experiences to explain your perspective. Also, challenge yourself to ensure your actions are congruent with your views.

Think creatively
Seek to make connections, find new possibilities, and rejecting nothing. Try these 5 ways to generate ideas:

- **Immersion** – immerse yourself in background research.
- **Digestion** – play with the information. Look at it from different perspectives.
- **Incubation** – put your notes aside and let your mind review the material passively as you engage in an enjoyable activity.
- **Illumination** – chances are your mind will spurt out ideas so be ready to write them down.
- **Reality testing** – as yourself if it’s really a good idea. Will it solve your problem?

Think systematically
Organize all the possibilities, decide which fits best and discard the rest. You can do this by reviewing the ideas that you’ve identified, eliminating the unreasonable ones.

Question
Be skeptical of solutions that seem easy and simplistic arguments by asking the following 5 kinds of questions:

- **Questions that probe the “so what!” response** - how information is relevant.
- **Questions that clarify meaning or conceptual vocabulary** – eliminate vagueness/assumptions.
- **Questions that explore assumptions, sources, and rationale** – identify which assumptions are being made and why.
- **Questions that seek to identify causes and effects or outcomes** – cause/effect or correlation relationships.
- **Questions that consider appropriate action** – prompt what you do with this information next.