



Development Report

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How to use your report

Success in the 21st century workplace demands critical thinking. This report contains information that will help you leverage and strengthen your critical thinking skills. More specifically, this report will enable you to:

- enhance your understanding of critical thinking,
- take a candid look at your critical thinking skills,
- link your critical thinking skills to important workplace competencies, and
- identify development priorities and create a development plan to advance your career.

As you go through your report, keep in mind that thinking critically requires a shift to "thinking about your thinking." It is a deliberate process that requires concentration, so take the time to review and reflect on your results.

How Your Report is Organised:

1. The **RED** Model
2. Understanding Critical Thinking
3. Snapshot of Your Critical Thinking Skills
 - a. Recognise Assumptions
 - b. Evaluate Arguments
 - c. Draw Conclusions
4. Applying Critical Thinking to Your Work
5. Planning Your Development
6. Progressing With Next Steps

The RED Model

Critical thinking can be organised into a "RED Model," an organising framework to facilitate learning: Recognising assumptions, Evaluating the merit of arguments or information that is presented, and Drawing appropriate conclusions based on the evidence available.



It is important to note that critical thinking is both fluid and sequential. When presented with information, people typically alternate between recognising assumptions and evaluating arguments. Critical thinking is sequential in that recognising faulty assumptions or weak arguments improves the likelihood of reaching an appropriate conclusion.

Understanding Critical Thinking

We operate in a continually changing workplace, where large volumes of information are rapidly exchanged. Your ability to efficiently and effectively evaluate this information and make good decisions sets the foundation for your success. Important competencies, including decision making, problem solving, planning, and strategic thinking, require sound critical thinking skills.

Critical thinkers do not accept claims on blind faith. Rather, they rigorously evaluate the quality of reasoning and evidence that leads to a conclusion. Being "critical" in this sense is not negative - it simply means that you are using certain standards to evaluate a given claim. The example below illustrates each element of the RED model of critical thinking.

Critical Thinking in Action

Suppose a charismatic gentleman offered you a risky, but potentially rewarding, way to double your personal wealth in mere days. You would probably want to think critically about his proposal before offering him your money.

First, consider his **assumptions** about you. By making this offer, he's implying that he thinks you have savings substantial enough to invest, and that you would want to risk them for a chance to grow them rapidly. Are his assumptions accurate?

Next, you would want to ask pointed questions based on certain standards, such as credibility and consistency, to **evaluate** his claim: "*What credentials qualify you to double my money?*" (Credibility) "*Have you doubled anyone else's money?*" (Consistency)

By asking these questions (i.e., being "critical"), you learn he isn't formally licensed, but recently read a few very informative books on investing. He has yet to try this new approach with anyone else, but shares that he really likes you and wants to offer you the chance to get onboard this opportunity early.

Thinking critically about his claim has given you useful information you didn't have before, which will help you **draw a conclusion** about what to do with your money. Based on what you know about his assumptions, qualifications, and experience, *would you invest with him?*

Snapshot of Your Critical Thinking Skills

Your responses on the Watson-Glaser (Critical Thinking Appraisal Form) were compared to other individuals in your profession. Based on this comparison, specific critical thinking skill areas are highlighted for your development. A skill marked:

- **Strength to Leverage** means you scored higher than most of your peers. You should make an effort to leverage this strength in your work.
- **Further Exploration** means your score was average compared to your peers. You have some strengths in this area, but you may not apply this skill consistently.
- **Opportunity for Development** means you scored lower than most of your peers. You should devote attention to building your proficiency in this area.

Skill Area	Strength to Leverage	Further Exploration	Opportunity for Development
Recognise Assumptions			✓
Evaluate Arguments		✓	
Draw Conclusions		✓	

Skilled vs Unskilled Behaviours

A brief description of each skill area and examples of skilled and unskilled behaviours are provided in the table below to help you to understand your results.

Critical Thinking	Skilled Behaviours	Unskilled Behaviours
<p>Recognise Assumptions: Assumptions are statements that are assumed to be true in the absence of proof. Identifying them helps reveal information gaps and enrich perspectives on an issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies what is being taken for granted • Explores diverse viewpoints on issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proceeds on unchecked assumptions • Reasons only from a single viewpoint
<p>Evaluate Arguments: Arguments are assertions that are intended to persuade someone to believe or act a certain way. Evaluating arguments is the process of analysing such assertions objectively and accurately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyses an argument's reasoning and supporting evidence thoroughly • Explores counterarguments, even when doing so is controversial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to question the reasoning and supporting evidence for an argument • Moves forward without considering opposing arguments
<p>Draw Conclusions: Drawing conclusions consists of arriving at conclusions that logically follow from the available evidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings diverse information together to come to an appropriate and reasonable conclusion • Changes a position when the evidence warrants doing so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes to a conclusion based on limited or biased information • Sticks to a position in spite of compelling evidence supporting a different conclusion

Recognise Assumptions

Assumptions are statements that are assumed to be true in the absence of proof. Identifying them helps to reveal information gaps and enrich perspectives on an issue. Assumptions can be unstated or directly stated. Being aware of these assumptions and directly assessing their appropriateness to a situation improves the quality and comprehensiveness of critical thinking.

YOUR RESULTS

Skill Area	Strength to Leverage	Further Exploration	Opportunity for Development
Recognise Assumptions			✓

Your score suggests that your skill in recognising assumptions is lower than your peers. Try to focus on building your proficiency in this area. Guidance on improving this skill is provided on the next page.

WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

Your score suggests that you should more consistently and actively:

- Identify what is assumed to be true in statements, arguments, or conclusions, and differentiate fact from opinion.
- Seek out different views of an issue as a way of bringing new assumptions to light. Since situations can change based on the assumptions underlying them, this will promote better contingency planning, as well as a thorough consideration of alternative approaches to an issue.
- Consider how appropriate different assumptions are for a situation.

Personal Reflections

Highlight the information under "What Does Your Score Mean?" that you think is most accurate. Where, when, and with who have you exhibited these behaviours?

HOW CAN YOU GROW YOUR SKILLS IN THIS AREA?

- **Ask basic questions to identify assumptions.** Assumptions are rarely spelled out, so you will need to take extra steps to identify them. Ask yourself, "What is being taken for granted?", "What do I expect to happen?", and "How do I know this is true?"
- **Consider your context.** Assumptions are often made based on factors such as your personal background, previous experience, organisational norms, or cultural expectations. How do these factors influence what you are assuming?
- **Dig into the details.** Assumptions might be based on different imagery (e.g. stereotypes vs. accurate representations of a group) or different ways of framing an issue (e.g. crisis vs. opportunity). Change the wording, imagery, and framing around an issue to create new assumptions.
- **Engage others.** Ask others to help you to challenge assumptions. Seek assistance from a diverse group - individuals from different divisions, organisations, industries, cultures, and/or geographies. Also, seek help from creative individuals who view issues differently or are good at highlighting unique elements of a situation.
- **Evaluate the assumptions.** Rate the quality of different assumptions. Start by identifying and listing the assumptions underlying each scenario, then explore whether each assumption is appropriate (e.g. how likely is this assumption to hold for this situation?). Be sure to factor in the implications and consequences of each (e.g. what if this assumption is wrong?)

Personal Reflections

Read the development suggestions above and check the ones that seem most useful to you. Where, when, and with whom could you employ these suggestions?

What other thoughts do you have about recognising assumptions?

Evaluate Arguments

Arguments are assertions that are intended to persuade someone to believe or act a certain way. Evaluating arguments is the process of analysing such assertions objectively and accurately. Analysing arguments helps determine whether to believe or act accordingly. It includes the ability to overcome a confirmation bias - the tendency to look for and agree with information that confirms prior beliefs. Emotion plays a key role in evaluating arguments as well - a high level of emotion can cloud objectivity and the ability to accurately evaluate arguments.

YOUR RESULTS

Skill Area	Strength to Leverage	Further Exploration	Opportunity for Development
Evaluate Arguments		✓	

Your score suggests that your skill in evaluating arguments is average compared to your peers. You may want to develop certain aspects of this critical thinking skill so that you can apply it more consistently and with greater proficiency. Guidance on improving this skill is provided on the next page.

WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

Your score suggests that you:

- Need to analyse arguments more rigorously by focusing on the evidence, relevance, and strength of the reasoning supporting the arguments.
- Sometimes look for information that confirms your preferred positions or personal beliefs instead of exploring issues from all sides. You may need to be more objective, even when doing so is controversial.
- May need to be more aware of how your emotions impact your thinking, especially if you find yourself getting "fired up" (either negatively or positively) about certain issues. In general, critical thinking suffers when people are highly emotional.

Personal Reflections

Highlight the information under "What Does Your Score Mean?" that you think is most accurate. Where, when, and with who have you exhibited these behaviours?

HOW CAN YOU EXPLORE DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS IN THIS AREA?

- **Identify your criteria.** Take the time to identify the criteria that are important for your evaluation. Start by looking for information that is clear, relevant, recent, credible, logical, accurate, consistent, comprehensive, and fair. Determine what other criteria are important so you can evaluate information based on standards meaningful to you.
- **Structure your evaluation.** Create an evaluation plan that includes the information that you need to determine the merit of the argument, the criteria you will use to evaluate that information, and the people who can help you with the evaluation process.
- **Seek evidence.** Remember that there is a difference between reasons and sound reasons. People may offer simple explanations that seem sound, but you should follow up by seeking evidence that provides strong support for these.
- **Avoid tricks.** Watch for inappropriate persuasion techniques. For example, does the argument include excessive appeals to emotions in place of sound reasoning? Is it framed in a way that pushes you toward a single conclusion? Has key information been left out? Is there anything suspicious about the figures or sources used to support the argument?
- **Prevent confirmation bias.** Actively seek out strong evidence for and against all arguments, especially when you favour certain arguments. This will help you to stay objective and balanced in your evaluation.
- **Watch for strong emotions.** Intense emotions can derail your evaluation of the reasoning and evidence for an argument. Be aware of your and others' strong feelings and make sure that they do not detract from the critical thinking process.

Personal Reflections

Read the development suggestions above and check the ones that seem most useful to you. Where, when, and with whom could you employ these suggestions?

What other thoughts do you have about evaluating arguments?

Draw Conclusions

Drawing conclusions consists of arriving at conclusions that logically follow from the available evidence. It includes evaluating all relevant information before drawing a conclusion, judging the likelihood of different conclusions being correct, selecting the most appropriate conclusion, and to avoid overgeneralising beyond the evidence.

YOUR RESULTS

Skill Area	Strength to Leverage	Further Exploration	Opportunity for Development
Draw Conclusions		✓	

Your score suggests that your skill in drawing conclusions is average compared to your peers. You may want to develop certain aspects of this critical thinking skill so that you can apply it more consistently and with greater proficiency. Guidance on improving this skill is provided on the next page.

WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

Your score suggests that you:

- Should sometimes gather and incorporate a bit more information before drawing a conclusion.
- Occasionally weight irrelevant, insignificant, or preferred information too heavily.
- Might need to evaluate the validity of alternative conclusions more strongly before deciding on one.
- Sometimes draw conclusions that do not follow from the supporting evidence, or alternatively, go further than the evidence warrants.

Personal Reflections

Highlight the information under "What Does Your Score Mean?" that you think is most accurate. Where, when, and with who have you exhibited these behaviours?

HOW CAN YOU EXPLORE DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS IN THIS AREA?

- **Draw it.** Represent verbal information graphically by using pictures, matrices, hierarchical tree diagrams, flow charts, and/or any other visual representation that may be useful. You can clarify your thinking by translating verbal information into visual information. This will help you to make connections that are not immediately apparent and to see areas where information is weak or missing.
- **Gather multiple sources of evidence.** Establish standards for the amount of evidence you will need before drawing a conclusion. Actively seek out missing and/or contradictory information that would lead to a different conclusion. Determine how dependent your conclusions are on a single piece of evidence (i.e. if this evidence were wrong, would the conclusion change?). Withhold judgment until you have thoroughly explored an issue from multiple angles.
- **Evaluate different conclusions.** Generate multiple alternative conclusions based on the evidence. Consider who stands to gain from certain conclusions. Explore the consequences and impacts of different conclusions as part of this process.
- **Find partners.** Involve others as you gather and evaluate sources of evidence before drawing a conclusion. This may help you to avoid weighting the wrong types of evidence inappropriately.
- **Seek challengers.** Solicit trusted colleagues to respectfully critique your conclusions. Ask them to challenge your thinking, your evidence, and your conclusions. This may be a difficult exercise, but it will help you to expose blind spots and biases in your thinking.

Personal Reflections

Read the development suggestions above and check the ones that seem most useful to you. Where, when, and with whom could you employ these suggestions?

What other thoughts do you have about drawing conclusions?

Applying Critical Thinking to Your Work

The RED Model was presented in separate components to help you to better understand the key elements of each. Your ultimate goal, however, should be to increase the overall quality of your critical thinking by targeting growth across all three areas. As noted previously, critical thinking is a fundamental skill that supports a number of 21st century competencies that are highly sought after in the workplace. Review each of these key competencies and consider how critical thinking impacts on your performance.

Decision Making: Makes good decisions based on analysis, experience and judgment. Does this in a timely manner, sometimes with incomplete information.

List one or two important decisions you have made in your role:

In terms of your critical thinking skills:
What did you do well during the decision making process?

What would you do differently if faced with that decision again?

Problem Solving: Uses logic and systematic methods to arrive at an effective solution. Is able to see and avoid common pitfalls.

List one or two significant problems you were required to solve in your role:

In terms of your critical thinking skills:
What did you do well during the problem solving process?

What would you do differently if faced with that problem again?

Organising and Planning: Identifies, organises and effectively uses resources to accomplish projects/tasks. Sets objectives and accurately identifies scope, timeline and task difficulty.

List one or two important organising and planning activities you have completed in your role:

In terms of your critical thinking skills:

What did you do well during the organising and planning process?

What would you do differently if faced with those activities again?

Strategic Thinking: Accurately anticipates trends and creates appropriate plans and strategies to implement plans. Possesses a broad perspective of one's business or functional area.

List one or two strategic planning activities you have completed in your role:

In terms of your critical thinking skills:

What did you do well during the strategic planning process?

What would you do differently if faced with those activities again?

Planning Your Development

If you want to build on your critical thinking skills, you need a plan to achieve this. Make your development plan specific: include your goals, the actions you will take, where and when you will act, the resources to facilitate your growth (including tools and people) and how progress will be monitored towards achieving your goals. It is best to focus on goals that are:

Important. They will significantly enhance your effectiveness.

Achievable. They can be realistically accomplished given your priorities, timelines, and resources.

Engaging. This will help you maintain the motivation to keep building your skills.

As you plan to develop your critical thinking skills, use these learning tips:

- Secure the time you need to practice. Skill building requires a lot of concentration time. Ensure that you have sufficient time to dedicate to this and that you have the support from your manager to do this.
- Practice every day. Even if it's only for a few minutes, doing something daily will help you apply your skills more consistently over time.
- Work on specific exercises to build specific skills. This will help you achieve results that are directly connected to your actions.
- Gain proficiency in simple tasks before moving to more complex tasks. You can build skills more effectively through incremental and gradual efforts.
- Seek input on how you are doing. Timely, accurate, and constructive feedback is essential to your growth.

Sample Development Plan

Below is an example of a development plan for effectively building skills in Drawing Conclusions.

Goal	Action(s) You Will Take	Where	When	Resource(s)
Build my Draw Conclusions skills	1. <i>Diagram issues that come up in Monday meetings</i>	• <i>At my desk</i>	• <i>Tues AM</i>	• <i>Flow chart software</i>
	2. <i>Review diagram with team; look for missing info</i>	• <i>Meeting room</i>	• <i>Thurs PM</i>	• <i>Team, process docs</i>
	3. <i>Ask supervisor to critique team's conclusions</i>	• <i>Her office</i>	• <i>Friday AM</i>	• <i>Supervisor</i>
How will you know that you are making progress?	Action 1: <i>I will have a tangible diagram to show for it.</i>			
	Action 2: <i>The team will actively take part in the discussion and generate a list of the information we need to resolve the issue.</i>			
	Action 3: <i>Supervisor will actively challenge team's ideas and help me come up with a plan for dealing with any weaknesses in our approach.</i>			

Your Development Plan

Goal	Action(s) You Will Take	Where	When	Resource(s)
Build my Recognise Assumptions skills	1.	•	•	•
	2.	•	•	•
	3.	•	•	•
How will you know that you are making progress?	Action 1:			
	Action 2:			
	Action 3:			

Goal	Action(s) You Will Take	Where	When	Resource(s)
Build my Evaluate Arguments skills	1.	•	•	•
	2.	•	•	•
	3.	•	•	•
How will you know that you are making progress?	Action 1:			
	Action 2:			
	Action 3:			

Your Development Plan

Goal	Action(s) You Will Take	Where	When	Resource(s)
Build my Draw Conclusions skills	1.	•	•	•
	2.	•	•	•
	3.	•	•	•
How will you know that you are making progress?	Action 1:			
	Action 2:			
	Action 3:			

Progressing With Next Steps

Building your critical thinking skills is an ongoing process, not a single event. Continue to challenge yourself through the following activities:

- Read more about critical thinking and discuss what you've learned with colleagues.
- Set new development goals.
- Seek out different opportunities to apply your skills.
- Reflect on your progress - Where have you grown? Where should you continue to grow?

Additional resources to support your learning are available at www.talentlens.com/en/watson. You may find these resources useful as you build your critical thinking skills.