

Development Report

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GFB

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.

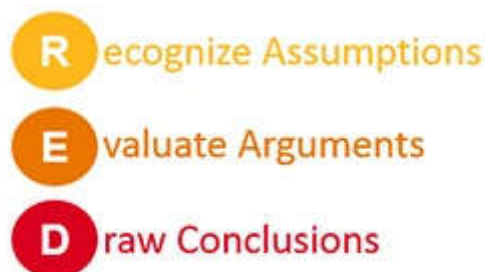
As you go through your report, keep in mind that thinking critically requires a shift to “thinking about your thinking.” It is a deliberate process that requires concentration, so be sure to take some time to review and reflect on your results.

How Your Report is Organized:

1. The **RED** Model
2. Understanding Critical Thinking
3. Snapshot of Your Critical Thinking Skills
 - a. Overall Score
 - b. Recognise Assumptions
 - c. Evaluate Arguments
 - d. 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 organized into a “RED Model,” an organizing framework to facilitate learning: **R**ecognising assumptions, **E**valuating the merit of arguments or information that is presented, and **D**rawing 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. 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 in on 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?

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.

Snapshot of Your Critical Thinking Skills

Overall Score

Compared to peers in the comparison group you are likely to demonstrate above average critical thinking ability. These abilities are important in a range of work settings such as executive, managerial, supervisory, professional and technical roles. This may be apparent in:

- defining problems and situations
- identifying information needed in decision making or problem solving
- applying logic and reasoning when analysing information
- drawing accurate conclusions from information
- developing arguments

Well Below Average	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Well Above Average
			✓	

RED Scores

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 organisation.
- **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 Areas	Strength to Leverage	Further Exploration	Opportunity for Development
Recognise Assumptions		✓	
Evaluate Arguments	✓		
Draw Conclusions	✓		

Skilled vs. Unskilled Behaviors

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

Critical Thinking	Skilled Behaviors	Unskilled Behaviors
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.	- Identifies what is being taken for granted - Explores diverse viewpoints on issues	- Proceeds on unchecked assumptions - Reasons only from a single viewpoint
Evaluate Arguments: Arguments are assertions that are intended to persuade someone to believe or act a certain way. Evaluating arguments is the process of analyzing such assertions objectively and accurately.	- Analyzes an argument's reasoning and supporting evidence thoroughly - Explores counterarguments, even when doing so is controversial	- Fails to question the reasoning and supporting evidence for an argument - Moves forward without considering opposing arguments
Draw Conclusions: Drawing conclusions consists of arriving at conclusions that logically follow from the available evidence.	- Brings diverse information together to come to an appropriate and reasonable conclusion - Changes a position when the evidence warrants doing so	- 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 Areas	Strength to Leverage	Further Exploration	Opportunity for Development
Recognise Assumptions		✓	

Your score suggests that your skill in recognising assumptions 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:

- Sometimes identify what is assumed to be true in statements, arguments, or conclusions and differentiate fact from opinion, but you sometimes accept information as presented.
- Could more frequently seek out different views of an issue as a way of bringing new assumptions to light. Thoroughly considering alternative approaches to an issue promotes better contingency planning.
- Could more consistently evaluate the appropriateness of different assumptions for a given situation.

Personal Reflections

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

HOW CAN YOU EXPLORE DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS IN THIS AREA?

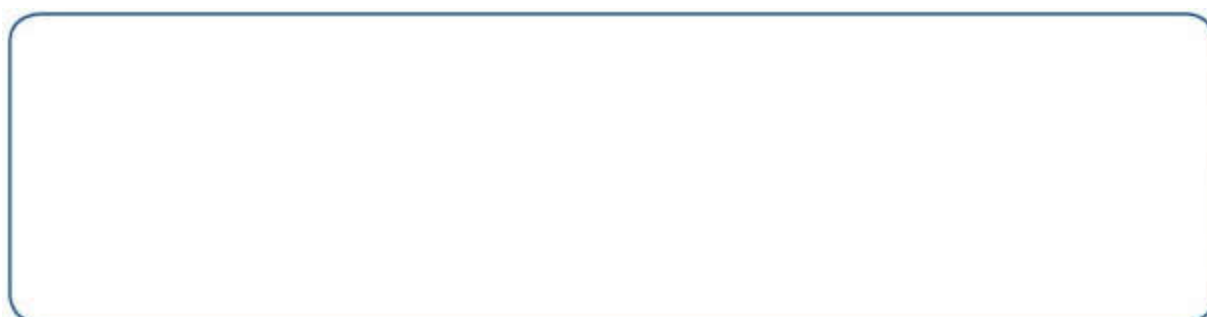
- **Ask basic questions to identify assumptions.** Assumptions are rarely spelled out, so try taking some extra steps to identify them. Ask yourself, "What is being taken for granted?", "What do I expect to happen?", and "How do I know this is true?"
- **Consider your context.** Assumptions are often 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?
- **Generate new assumptions.** Assumptions might be made 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. Consider how assumptions might change from the viewpoint of different stakeholders? In a different situation? In a different organisation? In a different culture?
- **Engage others.** Ask others to help you 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 Areas	Strength to Leverage	Further Exploration	Opportunity for Development
Evaluate Arguments	✓		

Your score suggests that your skill in evaluating arguments is strong relative to your peers. Make an effort to leverage this strength in your organisation. Since you are proficient at evaluating arguments, consider moving beyond evaluating the argument itself. Generate and evaluate counterarguments, and encourage others in your organisation to rigorously evaluate arguments. Guidance on leveraging this strength is provided on the next page.

WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

Your score suggests that you:

- Skillfully analyse arguments based on the relevance and strength of the reasoning and evidence supporting them.
- Maintain your objectivity by exploring issues from all sides, even when doing so is controversial.
- Prevent strong emotions from derailing your evaluation of issues.

Personal Reflections

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

HOW CAN YOU LEVERAGE YOUR STRENGTH IN THIS AREA?

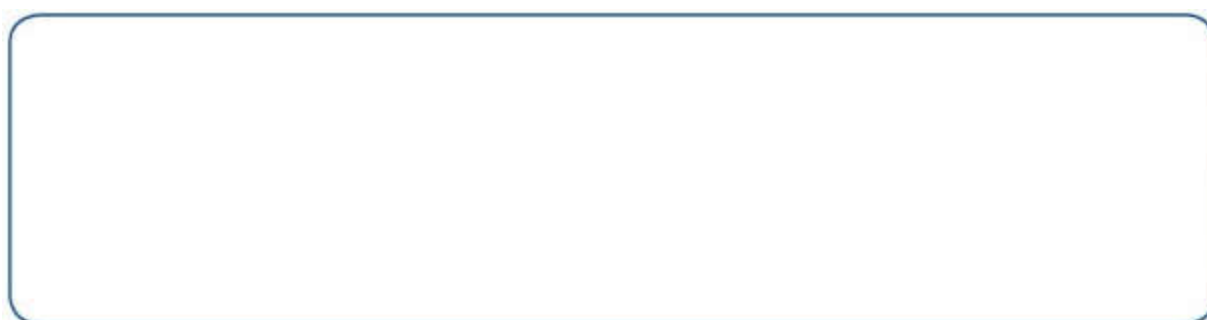
- **Be a vocal advocate.** Not everyone shares your skill at evaluating reasoning and evidence, so leverage this skill when important information is being presented.
- **Identify your criteria.** Take the time to identify the criteria that are important for your evaluation. Start by looking for information 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.
- **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?
- **Explore controversial arguments.** Adopt a controversial (but still reasonable) position and gather as much evidence for it as possible. Doing so will help you to understand and evaluate your original argument more comprehensively.
- **Watch for strong emotions.** Intense emotions can derail your ability to evaluate 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 Areas	Strength to Leverage	Further Exploration	Opportunity for Development
Draw Conclusions	✓		

Your score suggests that your skill in drawing conclusions is strong relative to your peers. Make an effort to leverage this strength in your organisation. Since you are proficient at drawing conclusions, consider moving beyond your current skills by encouraging others to draw better conclusions as well. Guidance on leveraging this strength is provided on the next page.

WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

Your score suggests that you:

- Gather sufficient information to draw sound conclusions.
- Avoid weighting irrelevant, insignificant, or preferred information too heavily.
- Effectively assimilate multiple sources of information into reasonable conclusions.
- Skillfully assess the validity of alternative conclusions.
- Arrive at conclusions that are based on reasonable supporting evidence.

Personal Reflections

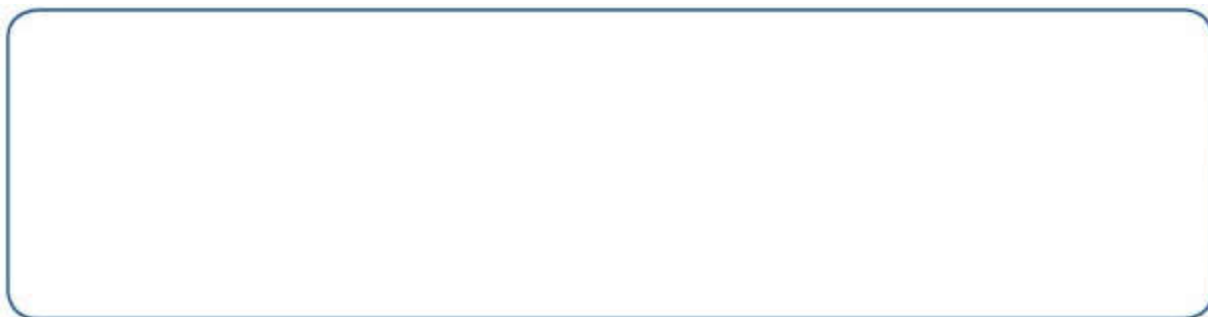
Highlight the information under What Does Your Score Mean? that you think is most accurate. Where, when, and with whom have you exhibited these behaviors?

HOW CAN YOU LEVERAGE YOUR STRENGTHS IN THIS AREA?

- **Be a vocal advocate.** Not everyone shares your skill at drawing reasonable conclusions, so leverage this skill in important situations and help others to develop this skill.
- **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?).
- **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.
- **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.
- **Avoid "analysis paralysis".** Understand how urgent the issue is, set an appropriate deadline, and prioritise how you will evaluate the issue before drawing a conclusion.

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 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 foundational 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 impacted your performance.

Decision Making: Makes good decisions based on analysis, experience, and judgment. Does so 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?

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

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

In terms of your critical thinking skills:
What did you do well during the organizing 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 those 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 truly want to build your critical thinking skills, you need a plan. 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 progress monitoring toward 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 your full concentration. Make sure your colleagues fully support your growth process.
- **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, graduated efforts.
- **Seek input on how you're 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. Diagram issues that come up in Monday meetings	• At my desk	• Tues AM	• Flow chart software
	2. Review diagram with team; look for missing info	• Meeting room	• Thurs PM	• Team, process docs
	3. Ask supervisor to critique team's conclusions	• Her office	• Friday AM	• Supervisor
How will you know that you are making progress?	Action 1: I will have a tangible diagram to show for it.			
	Action 2: The team will actively take part in the discussion and generate a list of the information we need to resolve the issue.			
	Action 3: Supervisor will actively challenge team's ideas and help me come up with a plan for dealing with any weaknesses in our approach.			

Your Development Plan

Goal	Action(s) You Will Take	Where	When	Resource(s)
Build My Recognize 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 challenging 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 growing?

Additional resources to support your learning are available at www.talentlens.com/uk/career-development/critical-thinking-hub.html. You may find these resources useful as you build your critical thinking skills.