

LIFE SKILL EXAMPLE BOOK • 03

Critical Thinking

Question claims, test evidence and own the judgment.

A WORKING DEFINITION

Critical thinking is the disciplined practice of clarifying claims, examining evidence and assumptions, testing alternatives, and revising judgment in proportion to the consequences.

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IN PRACTICE

Asks what is being claimed, checks how we know, searches for missing perspectives and explains why the conclusion is warranted.

It is

Purposeful and evidence-sensitive.

Both a skill and a willingness to question.

Proportional to consequence.

Open to revision.

It is not

Automatic skepticism.

Winning an argument.

Finding faults without alternatives.

Outsourcing verification to a confident tool.

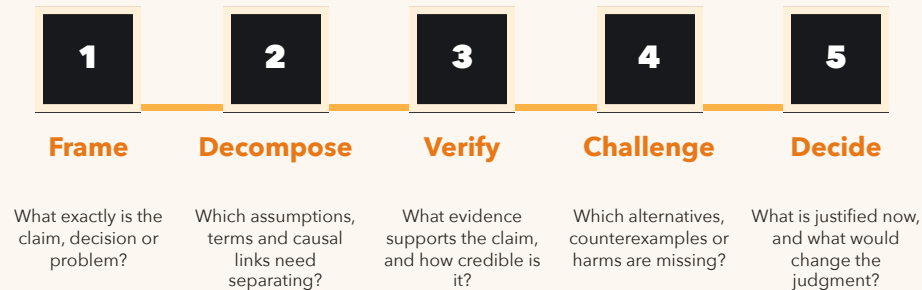
WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

In an AI-rich environment, fluent explanations can hide weak premises, missing data or invented sources. Critical thinking keeps speed subordinate to evidence and accountability.

THE CAPABILITY LOOP

A disciplined judgment loop.

Strong judgment is built through a sequence—not a personality type.



CLAIM What is asserted? State it precisely enough to test.	SUPPORT How do we know? Trace source, method, relevance and uncertainty.	CONSEQUENCE What follows? Match scrutiny and oversight to the stakes.
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BEHAVIOR CLUE

Asks what is being claimed, checks how we know, searches for missing perspectives and explains why the conclusion is warranted.

7 CONNECTED CAPABILITIES

Critical Thinking is a system.

**Reasoning becomes
reliable when its parts
can be examined.**



Information analysis Breaks complex material into meaningful parts.	Evidence evaluation Assesses credibility, relevance and sufficiency.
Logical reasoning Tests whether conclusions follow from premises.	Assumption identification Makes hidden beliefs and constraints visible.
Perspective analysis Compares interpretations and affected viewpoints.	Inference drawing Forms proportionate conclusions from evidence.
Metacognition Monitors bias, confidence and the quality of reasoning.	

The components strengthen one another. Development depends on how they are combined in context—not on maximizing one behavior in isolation.

WHY WE PROTECT THIS SKILL

Three signals—three different questions.

H

Human Core

How central should human agency, judgment and responsibility remain?



Human leads

Signal 4/5



Future Readiness

How strongly does this help people learn and act as roles and technology change?



Foundational

Signal 5/5



Safeguard Value

How strongly does this protect capability from over-reliance, deskilling and loss of agency?



**Critical
safeguard**

Signal 5/5

READ THESE AS STRATEGIC SIGNALS

They describe why the capability matters—not how advanced a learner is.

AI can generate options and counterarguments. The person must set the question, verify material claims and own the consequential judgment.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

Five stages of critical judgment.

The progression describes increasingly independent, contextual and socially enabling behavior—not intelligence or personal worth.



USE THE PROGRESSION WELL

Ask for the next observable behavior—not a label for the person.

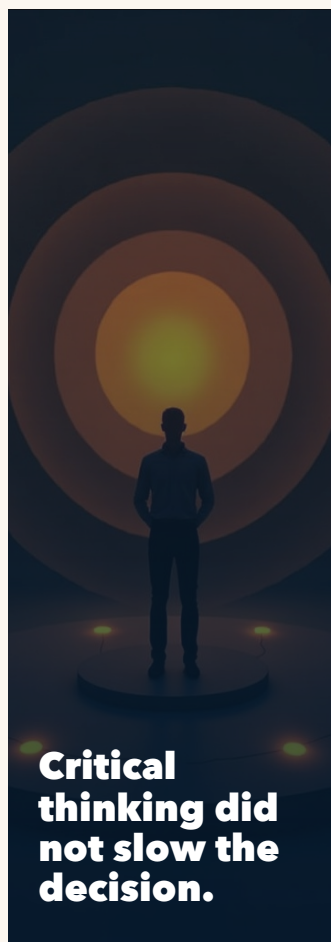
BEHAVIOR MAP

What critical thinkers do around a decision.

01 Before Clarify the question Separates the real decision from the first framing. Set evidence needs Names what must be known before acting. Map consequence Identifies who may be affected and how. Notice incentives Checks whose interests shape the information.	02 During Trace claims Connects assertions to sources and methods. Test assumptions Looks for hidden premises and boundary conditions. Seek disconfirmation Searches for evidence that could change the view. State uncertainty Separates known, inferred and unknown.	03 After Explain the judgment Shows how evidence and trade-offs led to the choice. Record conditions Names what would trigger review or reversal. Check outcomes Compares expected and actual effects. Update the method Improves future questions, evidence and gates.
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CASE STORY • COMPOSITE

When the AI report recommends closing a market.



The challenge. A leadership team receives a polished AI-generated analysis recommending a fast market exit. The narrative is coherent, the charts look convincing and the deadline is close.

1 • Frame

They restate the decision, stakeholders and cost of a false conclusion.

2 • Decompose

The team separates market demand, unit economics, capability gaps and timing.

3 • Verify

Two key citations cannot be traced and one comparison uses mismatched periods.

4 • Challenge

A local team supplies a counterexample and a lower-risk partnership option.

5 • Decide and learn

Leadership pauses the exit, runs a bounded test and documents verification gates.

CAPABILITY IN PRACTICE

Critical thinking did not slow the decision. It prevented speed from disguising weak evidence.

A PRACTICAL PROTOCOL

THINK before you commit.

Use this short structure in real work, reflection or coaching. Keep the action specific enough to observe.

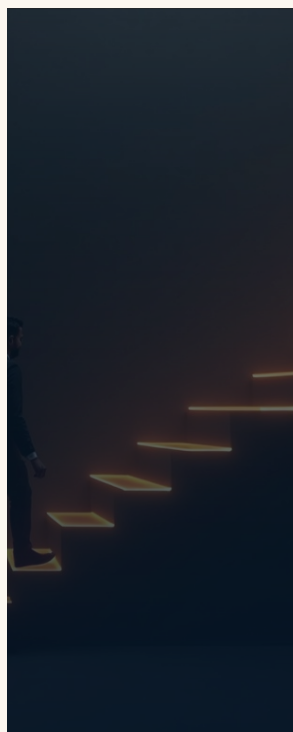
T Target What claim or decision are we actually testing?	H Hunt Which assumptions, incentives and missing voices matter?	I Inspect How credible, relevant and sufficient is the evidence?	N Name What alternatives, uncertainties and consequences remain?	K Keep / revise What judgment is justified, and what would change it?
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One-minute start: “The claim is ... The strongest evidence is ... The missing check is ...”

The protocol supports practice. It does not remove the need for context, expertise, ethical judgment or appropriate human support.

LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING CULTURE

Make reasoning visible before decisions become irreversible.



MODEL Show how your own conclusions change when evidence changes.

SLOW Create deliberate pauses before high-consequence commitments.

DIVERSIFY Invite dissent, domain expertise and affected perspectives.

VERIFY Set source, calculation and human-review gates for AI-supported work.

LEARN Review decision quality—not only whether the outcome happened to be good.

RESEARCH PULSE · 2022

A meta-analysis of 50 studies and 5,210 participants found problem-based learning was associated with improved critical thinking. Effects varied substantially, and very short interventions were ineffective.

Liu & Pásztor, Thinking Skills and Creativity. [R1]

SEVEN-DAY EXPERIMENT

Run one real claim audit.

Day 1 Select a consequential claim from work, media or an AI output.

Day 2 Rewrite it so the terms and implied decision are testable.

Day 3 Trace the best supporting source and inspect its method.

Day 4 List three assumptions and one missing perspective.

Day 5 Actively search for disconfirming evidence or a counterexample.

Day 6 Write a calibrated judgment: known, likely, uncertain and unknown.

Day 7 Share the reasoning and record what would change the conclusion.

MY JUDGMENT RECORD

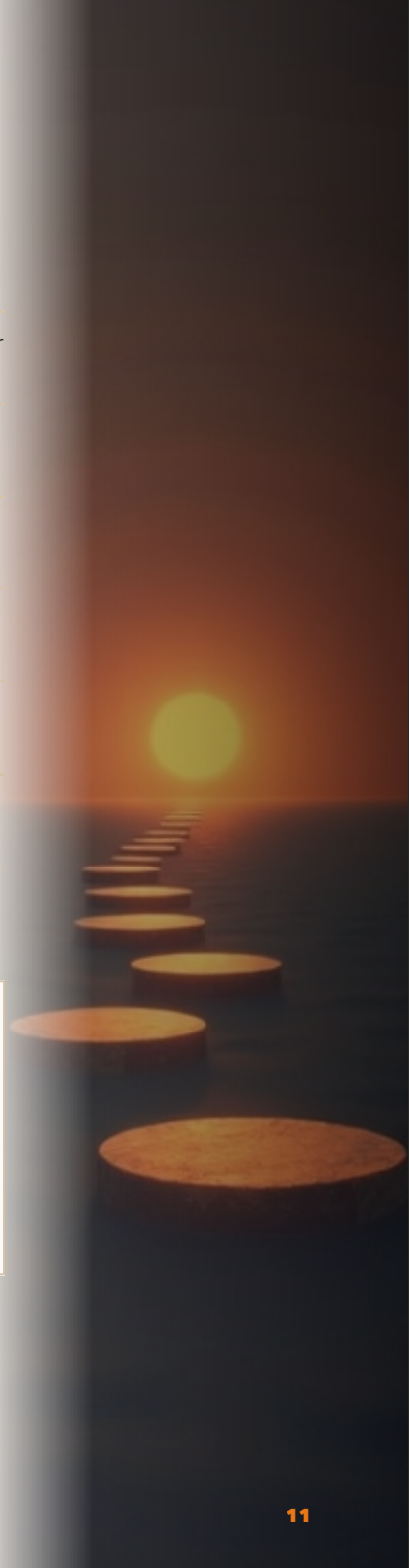
The claim:

The strongest evidence:

The missing check:

What would change my mind:

Track behavior and evidence. Reflection matters when it changes the next action.



Fluency is not evidence.

The human advantage is not producing the fastest answer. It is asking the question that exposes what must be checked—and owning the judgment that follows.

About This Material

WHAT THIS IS

This material is part of the Skills Pathfinder learning ecosystem developed by GrowthMindsetBuilder. It presents one or more human skills in a concise, practical format for learning, reflection and training.

It may be used as a standalone learning resource, but it is not a complete course. The broader learning experience—including facilitated activities, practice, feedback and progression—lives within the programmes and client projects from which this material was developed.

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Skills Pathfinder profiles and frameworks synthesize extensive research, international models and established good practices. They bring together multiple perspectives to make complex ideas accessible and useful in real-life learning and development.

No individual model or study provides a complete answer. Skills Pathfinder should therefore be understood as an evidence-informed framework for reflection and growth—not as a universal or final definition of human capability.

RESEARCH NOTES AND SOURCES

Where used, research callouts marked [R1], [R2] and so on provide short summaries of published studies. Each callout identifies the authors and publication so that you can find and examine the original research.

Research on human skills, AI capabilities and future readiness is developing quickly. Findings may differ across people, tasks, technologies and settings—and conclusions that appear settled today may change as new evidence emerges.

Treat each study as one contribution to the evidence rather than a final verdict. Compare perspectives, explore the original sources and form your own view. Where a source is cited, the original publication—not this summary—should be treated as authoritative.

CONTEXTUAL USE

Every skill profile is contextual. Language, terminology, emphasis and interpretation should be adapted to the cultural, educational, professional and organizational setting in which the material is used.

Local knowledge—and the experience of the people using the framework—is essential for making the material relevant, inclusive and effective.

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Reflection tools and self-assessments are intended to support learning and conversation. They are not clinical, psychological or psychometric diagnostic instruments and should not be used as the sole basis for employment, education or other high-stakes decisions.

Unless stated otherwise, case stories are composites created for learning use and do not describe identifiable individuals.

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