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UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

Critical Thinking

Introductory Guide
for Teachers and
Educational Managers

Better
Learning

Why teach Life Competencies?

Our world is changing fast and we need to prepare our students with the skills and experiences that go beyond simply learning an additional language.
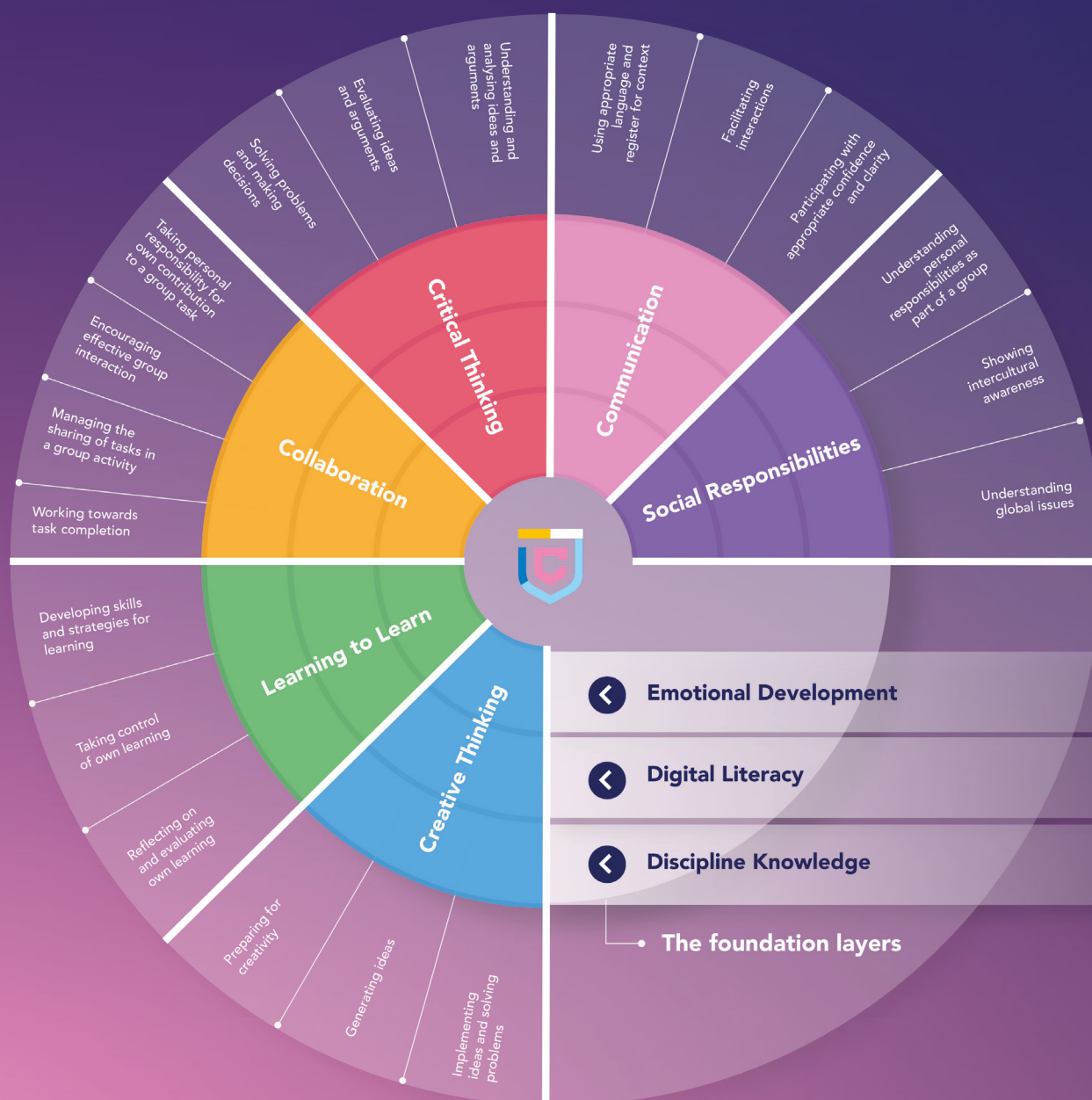
We see the increasing need to work together with people from around the world, to think creatively and solve problems, to analyse sources more critically, to communicate our views effectively, and to maintain a positive mindset in an increasingly complex world.

We understand that the engaging and collaborative nature of the language classroom is the perfect place to develop and embed these key qualities and the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports teachers in this challenging area.

Cambridge Life Competencies

A framework to develop skills for life

- Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments
- Evaluating ideas and arguments
- Solving problems and making decisions
- Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task
- Encouraging effective group interaction
- Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity
- Working towards task completion
- Developing skills and strategies for learning
- Taking control of own learning
- Reflecting on and evaluating own learning
- Preparing for creativity
- Generating ideas
- Implementing ideas and solving problems
- Using appropriate language and register for context
- Facilitating interactions
- Participating with appropriate confidence and clarity
- Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a group
- Showing intercultural awareness
- Understanding global issues

Critical Thinking
Communication
Collaboration
Social Responsibilities
Learning to Learn
Creative Thinking

< **Emotional Development**

< **Digital Literacy**

< **Discipline Knowledge**

• **The foundation layers**

What is the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework?

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework has been created in response to educators who have asked for a way to understand how life skills, or 21st century skills, can be integrated into English language programmes. It is made up of six **Competencies** that describe how these essential skills develop and vary across different stages of education, as learners grow and change.

CREATIVE THINKING	Learners actively participate in creative activities, generate new ideas and use them to solve problems.
CRITICAL THINKING	Learners identify patterns and relationships, evaluate ideas and use these skills to solve problems.
LEARNING TO LEARN	Learners develop practical skills to support and take control of their learning and reflect on their own progress.
COMMUNICATION	Learners choose the most appropriate language to use in different situations, manage conversations effectively and express themselves clearly and confidently.
COLLABORATION	Learners work well together in groups through actively taking part in group activities, listening to others, sharing tasks and finding solutions to problems.
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES	Learners recognise and describe different roles and responsibilities in a variety of groups and understand cultural and global issues.
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Learners describe and manage emotions and develop positive relationships with others.

The Learning Journey

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports learners at all stages of their learning journey, from very young pre-primary learners right through to adults in education and at work. The framework maps out how learner behaviours typically found within each competency can change and develop as learners encounter new situations and circumstances in their lives, both within and beyond the classroom.

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework allows us to support learners throughout their education and into the careers of the future.


Pre-Primary

Primary

Secondary

Higher Education

At Work

Understanding the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is made up of six **Competencies** – *Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Learning to Learn, Communication, Collaboration* and *Social Responsibilities.* Each broad competency is broken down into **Core Areas** that describe these competencies in more detail. These are then analysed further into **Components** that, along with example **Can Do Statements**, describe the observable behaviours that learners are likely to be able to demonstrate by the end of each stage of learning if they have had the opportunity to develop in these areas.

Competency

Core areas

Components

Example Can Do Statements
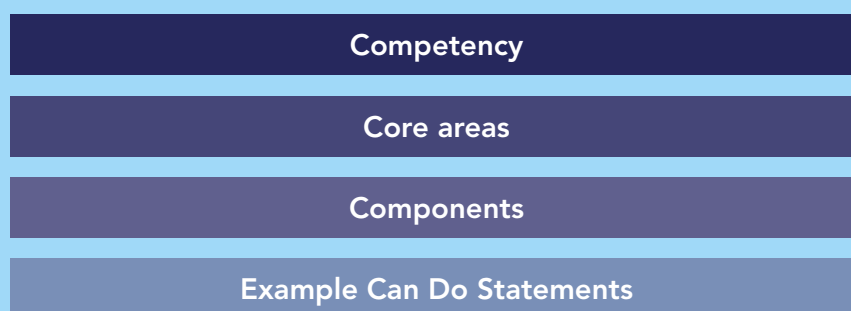
Linked to the competencies are the three foundation layers of the framework – *Emotional Development, Digital Literacy* and *Discipline Knowledge.* Development of skills in these foundation layers underpins all other competencies.

Along with this structured breakdown, we provide **example language** that learners may use to express the actions and behaviours found in each of the Core Areas at each stage of learning. These have been informed by both our Functional Language Phrase Bank, a collection of spoken data from expert speakers of English from children to adults, and input from experienced ELT practitioners from around the world. See this example for one Core Area within Critical Thinking at the Primary stage:

COMPETENCY	CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
CRITICAL THINKING	Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments	Identifying and classifying information	Identifies characters, setting, plot and themes in a story.	It's about [a man]…
		Recognising patterns and relationships	Compares different types of information (e.g. looking for similarities and differences).	In the first [picture/box], there's…
		Interpreting and drawing inferences from arguments and data	Explains why things happened (e.g. identifying cause and effect in a story).	He was angry because…

By clearly defining these areas of development in a structured and detailed way, we can ensure that our teaching and learning materials take a systematic approach to delivering and developing these skills in our learners, as they progress. This means that teachers can be assured that our resources bring out the best in their students, without creating extra work.

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is an ongoing project, evolving through stages of validation and teacher feedback. Go to **cambridge.org/clcf** to see how you can get involved.

What is Critical Thinking ?

Critical thinking refers to higher levels of thinking that learners need to enable them to think effectively and rationally about what they want to do and what they believe is the best action. Thinking critically is effortful (Halpern, 2014) and consists of skills such as identifying links between ideas, analysing and evaluating arguments and undertaking reasoning, in order to come to appropriate conclusions.).

We have identified three **Core Areas** within Critical Thinking:

CRITICAL THINKING		
Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments	Evaluating ideas and arguments	Solving problems and making decisions

- **Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments** refers to a learner's ability to identify and analyse information in order to recognise patterns and relationships. This helps students to gain a deeper understanding of ideas and arguments, as well as to interpret and draw inferences about the information they are presented with.

- **Evaluating ideas and arguments** is related to a learner's ability to judge which arguments or ideas they can rely on and which they should be sceptical about. This includes evaluating evidence presented in an argument, as well as the argument's overall logic. Mastering this competency helps learners draw appropriate conclusions and construct strong arguments themselves.

- **Solving problems and making decisions** involves many skills such as identifying and analysing problems, gathering appropriate information, evaluating a range of options, making decisions about which options to implement and finally, evaluating those decisions to further refine solutions.

Within these Core Areas we break things down further, defining the **Components** that make up each Core Area:

CRITICAL THINKING	Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments	Identifying and classifying information
		Recognising patterns and relationships
		Interpreting and drawing inferences from arguments and data
	Evaluating ideas and arguments	Evaluating specific information or points in an argument
		Evaluating arguments as a whole
		Drawing appropriate conclusions
	Solving problems and making decisions	Identifying and understanding problems
		Identifying, gathering and organising relevant information
		Evaluating options and recommendations to come to a decision
		Justifying decisions and solutions
		Evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions

Critical Thinking
across the learning journey

Core Areas may be realised in different ways across the different stages of learning. In order to demonstrate this, each Core Area and Component is contextualised by an example Can Do Statement. This illustrates what kinds of behaviour students who are competent in this area might display by the end of each stage of learning. These example Can Do Statements can be used as a starting point in the development of a curriculum, programme or assessment system and will vary in their suitability for learners in different contexts. The example language is provided for teachers to consider what kind of language they could encourage their students to use in these kinds of tasks.

PRE-PRIMARY

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments	Identifying and classifying information	Sorts, arranges and describes objects by shape, size, colour, weight, texture and position.	It's a [square / circle / triangle].
	Recognising patterns and relationships	Matches objects, people, letters, pronunciations and words.	They're [comparative adjective].
	Interpreting and drawing inferences from arguments and data	Draws simple inferences from pictures or stories (e.g. guesses from a picture of a broken toy that there was an accident).	She is [happy/sad/angry].
Evaluating ideas and arguments	Evaluating specific information or points in an argument	Judges whether something is true or not.	True! / False!
	Evaluating arguments as a whole	Identifies whether a text is factual or fictional.	That's [real / not real].
	Drawing appropriate conclusions	Chooses which 'point of view' they agree with most.	I agree with … because…
Solving problems and making decisions	Identifying and understanding problems	Identifies characters' problems in stories.	It's not working!
	Identifying, gathering and organising relevant information	Identifies some options for solving a problem.	He/she can [verb].
	Evaluating options and recommendations to come to a decision	Explains what is good and bad about different options.	It's good because…
	Justifying decisions and solutions	Explains why they have chosen a particular option.	Because…
	Evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions	Explains whether a solution is working or not.	It doesn't work because…

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments	Identifying and classifying information	Identifies characters, setting, plot and themes in a story.	It's about [a man]…
	Recognising patterns and relationships	Compares different types of information (e.g. looking for similarities and differences).	In the first [picture/box], there's…
	Interpreting and drawing inferences from arguments and data	Explains why things happened (e.g. identifying cause and effect in a story).	He was angry because...
Evaluating ideas and arguments	Evaluating specific information or points in an argument	Judges whether something is true or not, and gives a reason.	I don't think so.
	Evaluating arguments as a whole	Explains why they believe or don't believe what a character says in a story.	[He]'s telling a lie because...
	Drawing appropriate conclusions	Suggests possible reasons for problems described in a text.	Maybe…?
Solving problems and making decisions	Identifying and understanding problems	Describes problems in a situation given in a story (factual or fictional).	There aren't any…
	Identifying, gathering and organising relevant information	Identifies potential solutions to a real-world problem (e.g. reducing pollution).	[We] could…
	Evaluating options and recommendations to come to a decision	Describes consequences of different potential actions of characters in a story.	If [he]…, [he] will…
	Justifying decisions and solutions	Articulates preferences and can justify their choices.	I prefer…because…
	Evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions	Makes predictions and estimations from given information.	This plant will grow faster than the others.

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments	Identifying and classifying information	Identifies the basic structure of an argument.	This is the conclusion.
	Recognising patterns and relationships	Compares points and arguments from different sources.	Here…but there…
	Interpreting and drawing inferences from arguments and data	Identifies assumptions and inferences in an argument.	[She] really thinks…

Evaluating ideas and arguments	Evaluating specific information or points in an argument	Identifies evidence and its reliability.	How can you prove it?
	Evaluating arguments as a whole	Gives reasons for an argument's plausibility.	I think it's true because…
	Drawing appropriate conclusions	Selects key points from diverse sources to create a new account and/or argument.	In summary…
Solving problems and making decisions	Identifying and understanding problems	Identifies problems in a proposed plan (e.g. to organise an event at school).	It's fine in theory, but…
	Identifying, gathering and organising relevant information	Gathers information from reputable sources to understand different perspectives on an issue.	I did some research on [website].
	Evaluating options and recommendations to come to a decision	Examines possible solutions to a given problem and states how effective they are.	The problem with [x] is that…
	Justifying decisions and solutions	Presents justification for a particular solution in a well-structured report.	There are three main reasons for…
	Evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions	Considers which elements of the solution have worked well and which have not.	[x] went well because…

HIGHER EDUCATION

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments	Identifying and classifying information	Identifies the key points in an argument.	The main point is…
	Recognising patterns and relationships	Contrasts different points of view on a specific topic.	If you look at it like this…
	Interpreting and drawing inferences from arguments and data	Identifies unstated assumptions and biases in an argument.	That's a generalisation.
Evaluating ideas and arguments	Evaluating specific information or points in an argument	Checks clarity, relevance and fairness of different arguments and points of view.	I don't think that point is relevant.
	Evaluating arguments as a whole	Recognises basic weaknesses in argumentation.	That doesn't make sense.
	Drawing appropriate conclusions	Arrives at nuanced evaluations of ideas and arguments.	Taking [x] into account…

Solving problems and making decisions	Identifying and understanding problems	Identifies problems to be addressed in a project relating to their area of study.	If [x happens], then [y won't].
	Identifying, gathering and organising relevant information	Gathers data or information in a systematic way in order to conduct a robust analysis and evaluation.	I've been using [x] to keep track of the articles I have been reading.
	Evaluating options and recommendations to come to a decision	Produces a systematic evaluation of different possible solutions.	It doesn't meet our criteria.
	Justifying decisions and solutions	Selects best options from a range of proposed procedures and justifies choices.	I chose [this] because…
	Evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions	Identifies areas in which to improve an implemented solution.	Next time, we could…

AT WORK

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments	Identifying and classifying information	Summarises key points from business-related documents and presentations.	The key point is…
	Recognising patterns and relationships	Identifies patterns in business and operational data.	[Sales] are going down/increasing.
	Interpreting and drawing inferences from arguments and data	Identifies assumptions underlying a speaker's or writer's argument (e.g. in a business proposal).	To me, that suggests…
Evaluating ideas and arguments	Evaluating specific information or points in an argument	Evaluates the plausibility of explanations in an argument, report or proposal, e.g. the weight of evidence.	But surely…?
	Evaluating arguments as a whole	Judges the strength of an argument, report or proposal (e.g. its significance and coherence).	This argument lacks…
	Drawing appropriate conclusions	Arrives at nuanced evaluations of ideas and arguments.	Taking [x] into account…
Solving problems and making decisions	Identifying and understanding problems	Describes problems to be addressed in relation to specific work issues (e.g. products, services, internal systems, working practices).	There should be…but…
	Identifying, gathering and organising relevant information	Identifies and accesses appropriate sources of knowledge and expertise in pursuit of solutions to problems.	According to…
	Evaluating options and recommendations to come to a decision	Evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of a particular proposal.	The problem with [x] is…
	Justifying decisions and solutions	Selects an appropriate solution to a problem and justifies their choice.	This might work if we…
	Evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions	Identifies areas in which to improve an implemented solution.	Next time, we could…

Critical Thinking
in the classroom

The English language classroom is a supportive environment in which learners have the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills. It already offers many opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, for example through reading and listening comprehension activities, and the careful construction of written texts or presentations examining different sides of an argument.

As the demand for critical thinking skills in universities and the workplace increases, the English language classroom should seek to build on this background and ensure that this competency is embedded within the curriculum. These skills have not only an instrumental value (for example, in helping learners do well in standardised English assessment tests, such as IELTS), but also a social value, with learners developing increased awareness and empathy by noticing, understanding and managing different points of view. Moreover, a second language can provide a safe space for learners to explore ideas they may not have thought about before. Indeed, some learners who may be unwilling or afraid of expressing an idea in their own language may be more willing to do this in a second language.

Critical thinking is inherently linked to other competencies outlined in the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework. It encourages learners to consider different points of view and challenge their pre-conceptions, thus developing their creative thinking and ability to communicate and collaborate with others. It develops skills that will be vital for success in an unknown future, such as the ability to analyse options and make better decisions.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Regardless of the age of learners, at the heart of critical thinking is the notion of asking questions. Learners should be encouraged to continually question the information they receive and the conclusions they come to. The teacher should push learners to deeper critical thinking by asking them questions, such as:

- Why is that your answer?

- How did you come to that answer?

- Do you think there could be another answer?

Teachers should genuinely listen to learners when taking feedback and respond accordingly, by properly evaluating their ideas and arguments. In so doing, they show their learners that they too are critical thinkers (i.e. act as an effective model).

Young learners are naturally curious. As such, it is crucial that learners do activities which actively encourage this curiosity. To this end, it is important to create an atmosphere in the classroom which encourages learners to think critically. Teachers must ensure learners really listen to each other during speaking activities so they can ask effective questions, and in doing so, understand and analyse links between ideas.

The following are some classroom activities and strategies that teachers can use to promote critical thinking development:

Translanguaging

When teaching speaking, teachers should consider using 'translanguaging', where learners can 'mix and match' their first language with the target language (i.e. English). This practice, which is common in many multilingual societies, can help manage the problems that occur when the content of an activity is too linguistically challenging, and help learners in better understanding and analysing links between ideas. This should be seen as an intermediary stage, prior to learners being able to do the task entirely in the target language.

Storybooks

Storybooks can be a useful resource when developing critical thinking skills with young learners. When teaching reading with a storybook, more predicting could be encouraged – for example, guessing what the story is going to be about from its title, or from the pictures. This can continue throughout the story through dialogic reading practices, i.e. asking learners questions at key points

The doughnut method

After a task is a complete, learners feed back to others on what they have learnt. This activity encourages task repetition, so that learners deepen their knowledge on the topic. Learners follow these steps:

1. Learners form two rings facing each other – learners in the inner ring present their feedback to the learners opposite them;

2. After two minutes, learners in the outer ring move round to the right one place;

3. Learners in the outer ring then tell the learners opposite them what the previous learner said;

4. The process repeats itself several times.

Doughnut method
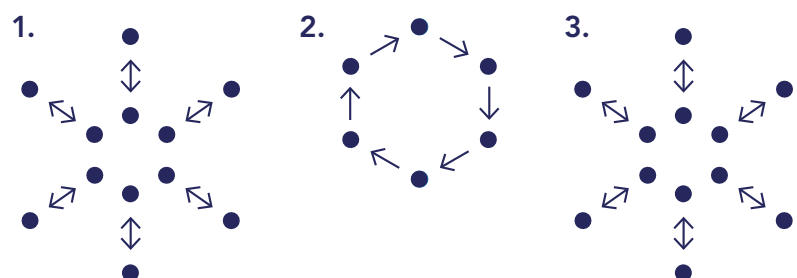
Visual organisers

These can be useful tools for learners to organise, evaluate and compare their thoughts and ideas. For example, a Venn diagram can be used to help learners to identify similarities and differences, as in the following example.

Compare your answers with a partner. Write your ideas in the left circle. Write your partner's ideas in the right circle. Then write things you agree on in the middle.
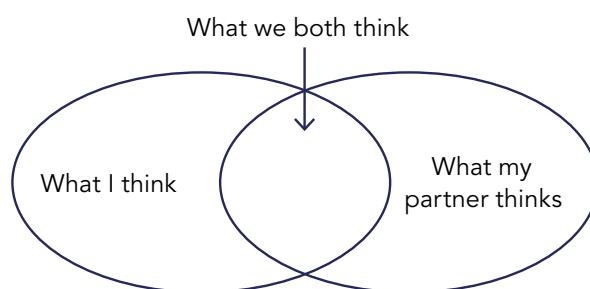
What we both think

What I think

What my partner thinks

> **Over to you...**

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
   - When planning the activity, you may find the guidance in the 'General suggestions' section helpful.
   - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their critical thinking skills.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could make these activities more effective in developing critical thinking skills effective in developing critical thinking skills.

Learners at this age are motivated by topics and activities that are relevant to them or that interest them. It is therefore important to personalise the learning. Teachers should try to link course book material to learners' actual lives, or to their educational institution. If what they are learning in the classroom really means something to the learners, or if they are more familiar with the subject matter, they are far more likely to be able to understand the concepts and make links between ideas.

The following are some classroom activities and strategies that teachers can use to promote the development of critical thinking skills:

Flipping the learning

Learners may benefit from flipping the learning. Learners (especially higher-level learners) can be given more responsibility and opportunity to develop the core 'knowledge' outside of classroom time (e.g. for homework). This will help them to synthesise ideas and information. It will also mean that time in the classroom can be maximised for aspects of language acquisition which learners are less able to do by themselves, for example arguing, discussing, comparing, challenging and debating.

Exploiting productive activities

Productive activities (i.e. involving speaking and writing) are good opportunities to develop critical thinking. For example, when teaching writing, a teacher could set the same essay question for the whole class, then take the learners through the following steps:

1) Student A writes the first paragraph, and then passes it on to Student B.
2) Student B must read this paragraph and continue the writing.
3) After a few minutes, this is passed on to Student C, who continues the process.

At every stage, learners are having to synthesise ideas and information as well as evaluate ideas, arguments and options. This can be a very effective and controlled method for developing writing, particularly for learners who are nervous about the idea of writing a long text by themselves.
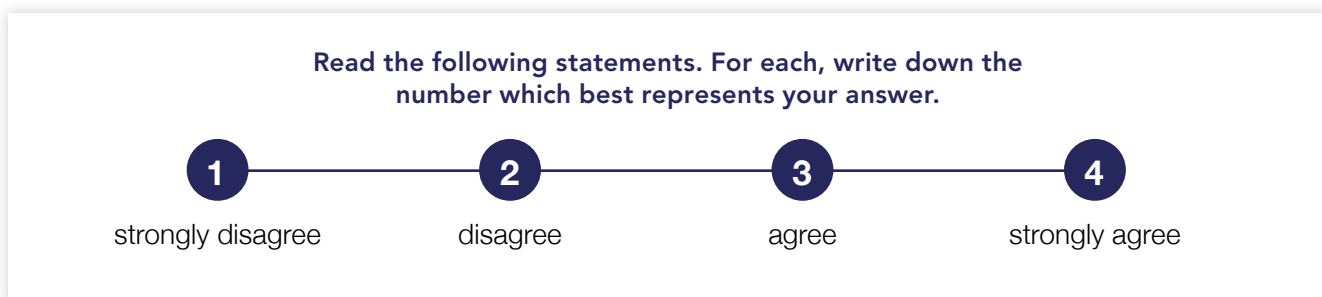
The snowball technique

This is an effective way to take feedback from a whole class and get learners listening to each other. This is usually done after an individual task in which learners have come up with their own answers. Then, after getting into pairs, learners follow these steps:

1. Students A and B compare their answers, and agree on one they are both happy with.
2. Students A and B share their answers with C and D (and vice versa), and repeat step 1.
3. Step 1 repeats with the group size doubling each time, until it gets to the whole class level.

Snowball technique
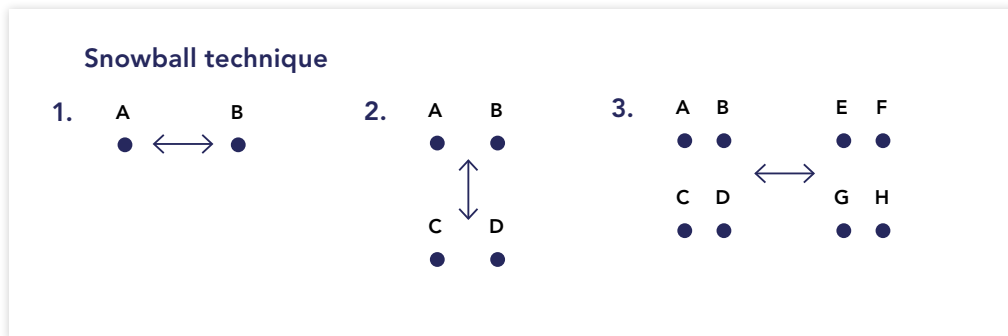
Ranking and scales

Scales, such as a Likert Scale, can be used to get learners to think more deeply about their attitudes and opinions, and compare their answers with others in a visual way, such as in the following activity:

Read the following statements. For each, write down the number which best represents your answer.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

> ⤷ *Over to you...*
>
> 1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
>   -   When planning the activity, you may find the guidance in the 'General suggestions' section helpful.
>   -   Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their critical thinking skills.
> 2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could make these activities more effective in developing critical thinking skills.

ADULT

Particularly relevant to learners at this age is the ability to think critically within academic and work contexts.

The following are some classroom activities and strategies that teachers can use to promote the development of critical thinking skills:

Diverse source material

In order to engage adult learners in critical thinking activities, teachers could provide them with opportunities to see issues from multiple perspectives. Teachers should provide source material (or get learners to find material) which provides rich, diverse, multi-faceted input, not just from one perspective but from multiple perspectives. This will help learners develop the skill of evaluating ideas, arguments and options, as well as synthesising ideas and information.

It may be relevant to be more explicit when teaching critical thinking skills to adults. When learners have done an activity where critical thinking skills have been applied, teachers should talk about it, and get learners to reflect on what they have done. When taking feedback, teachers should not only be asking for the correct answer, but how learners got to that particular answer.

Information gap activities

When teaching listening, teachers could do more 'information gap' activities, where the information which learners receive is restricted. For example, an activity that uses video might work in the following way:

1. The class is split into two groups. Group 1 watches the first half of a video, while Group 2 watches the second half. Alternatively, Group 1 could watch a video with the sound off, while Group 2 listens only.

2. Learners from Group 1 then pair up with learners from Group 2. In their pairs, they must work to reconstruct and retell the whole scenario from the video.

These kinds of tasks place more responsibility on learners to become active listeners and engage in collaborative work with their classmates. In addition, they require learners to gain a deeper understanding of the information presented to them by asking appropriate questions and seeing the relationships between the different information they and their partner have.

Class debates

Debates are an authentic way of getting learners to listen actively to their peers and consider arguments from different viewpoints, in order to make informed decisions. Learners are divided into different roles, e.g. speaker, timekeeper, those debating 'for', those debating 'against', and the audience (who will ultimately vote on a result). Learners then debate a given topic. The classroom can be set up in the following way:

Debate set up

Chair   Timekeeper

'For side'   'Against' side

Audience
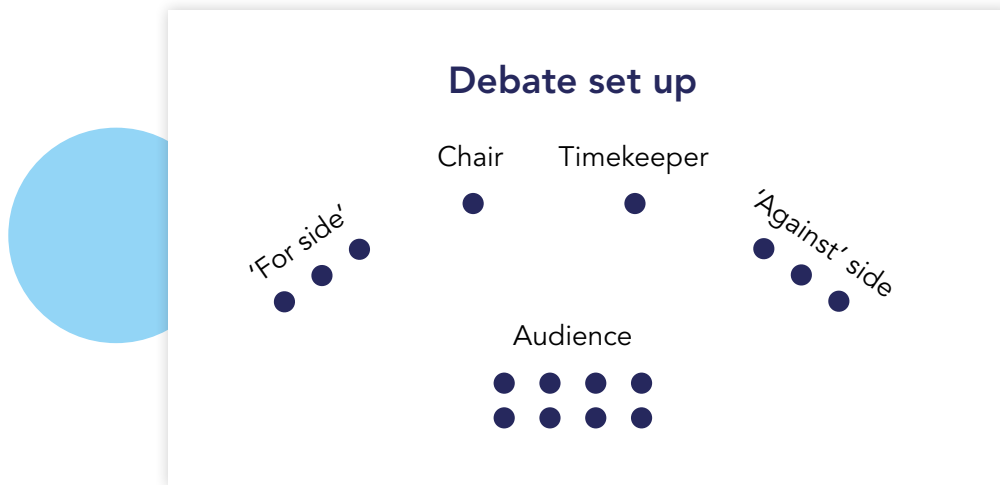
Visual diagrams

A diagram, such as a cross-diagram in the example below, can be used for learners to make more complex evaluations, e.g. the strengths and weaknesses of solutions to a particular problem.
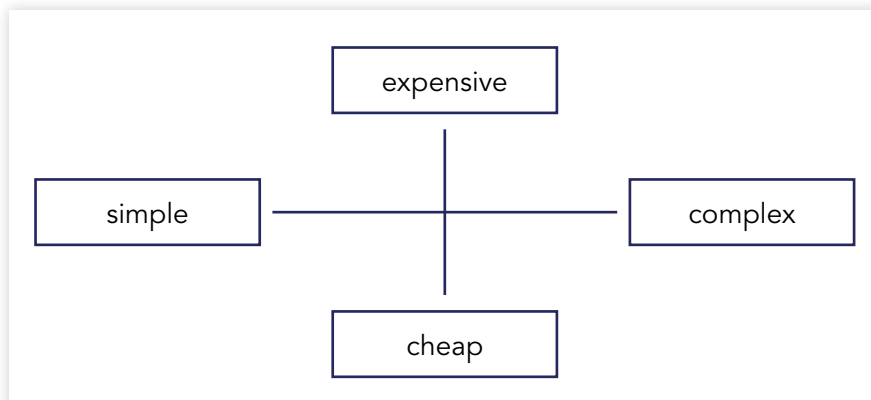
expensive

simple   complex

cheap

> **Over to you…**
> 1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
>   - When planning the activity, you may find the guidance in the 'General suggestions' section helpful.
>   - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their critical thinking skills.
> 2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could make these activities more effective in developing critical thinking skills.

Critical Thinking
in learning materials

Here, students practise critical thinking by identifying problems ('What goes wrong with this?' in exercise 3) and coming up with solutions ('What can fix this?' in exercise 4). This involves students evaluating the options that are presented to come to a decision as to which one is best in each case.

6

'What's this?' asked Phoebe, looking at a machine that looked like a big egg. 'That's my amazing hairdressing machine,' said the professor. 'Choose any style or colour, then sit under it and in five seconds the machine will do your hair for you. Give it a go. You'll love it!' 'Erm, no thanks,' answered Phoebe. 'I like my hair the way it is.'

'Hey, professor? What happens if I pull this?' asked Patrick, who was standing next to another invention. 'Don't touch that!' shouted the professor. 'That machine isn't finished yet.' Too late! The lever was already down. A yellow light started glowing by the machine. 'Now that's strange,' said the professor. 'I've no idea what that is.' 'But we know what it is,' said Phoebe. 'Goodbye, professor.' The children walked into the light. They were gone in a flash.
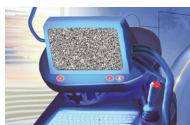
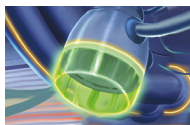**3** **Look at the pictures and answer the questions.**
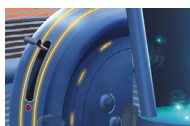
1 What goes wrong with this?

2 What goes wrong with this?

3 What goes wrong with this?

4 Why doesn't Phoebe want to use this?

5 Who pulls this lever?

6 What does this last machine do?

4 **Think!** What tool does the professor need to fix these problems?

1

2

3

4

Reading for pleasure **75**

Super Minds Level 6, *page 75*
ISBN 9781107458291

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Here, students practise critical thinking by considering a number of statements (exercise 7) and evaluating the arguments in them to come to a conclusion as to whether they agree or disagree with them. They are also encouraged to justify their decisions.

PRACTICE

2 [3.02] **Read and listen to the extract. Do you agree with Thomas Gradgrind's view of education? Why / Why not?**

3 **Decide if the sentences are true (T) or false (F). Correct the false ones.**

		T	F
1	There are only boys in the class.	T	F
2	Mr Gradgrind wants his own children to learn facts.	T	F
3	The schoolroom is very colourful.	T	F
4	Mr Gradgrind keeps touching the schoolmaster.	T	F
5	Mr Gradgrind smiles at the children.	T	F
6	Mr Gradgrind has a musical voice.	T	F
7	There is some hair on Mr Gradgrind's head.	T	F
8	The other people in the classroom do not speak.	T	F

4 **Look at the picture of Tom Sawyer. Where is he? Do you think he likes school? Why / Why not?**

5 [3.03] **Listen to Tom Sawyer talking about school and answer the questions.**

1 What does Tom think of school? Why does he think this?
2 Why does Mr Dobbin say, 'Tom Sawyer! Is that you again?'
3 Would Tom like to be a better student?
4 Why is school not all bad for Tom?
5 Does Becky like Tom?
6 How does Tom spend his time in class now?

6 **Choose one of the following tasks.**

1 You are a pupil who listened to Mr Gradgrind. Tell a friend in an email what he looks like, what he said and what you think of him.
2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of learning outside the classroom? Can you name any examples of this?
3 Find out about a novel that talks about school and education. Does it present a positive or negative image? Present your ideas to the class.

RESEARCH SKILLS

7 Critical thinking **Tick (✓) the statements you do not agree with and explain why.**

1 'Learning facts like historical dates or the periodic table is pointless for today's children – all the facts they need they can find at the touch of a button.'
2 'Teaching children to write with pens and paper is vitally important. Everyone needs to be able to write.'
3 'Schools should concentrate on teaching skills that are useful for future jobs. Anything else is wasting their time.'

8 **PAIRWORK Look at the list of books and films. Do you already know these works? What do you know about them?**

- *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)
- *Lord of the Flies* (1954)
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960)
- *The Breakfast Club* (1985)
- *Dead Poets Society* (1989)
- *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012)
- *Boyhood* (2014)

9 **RESEARCH Choose one of the works above and find out:**

1 What happens to the young characters in them? Are their experiences positive or negative or both?
2 What do they learn from their experiences?
3 Is there a happy or sad ending?

COMPETENCY SKILLS

- Planning and prioritising (ex 1)
- Identifying links and relations (ex 7)
- Communicating (ex 8)
- Acquiring and interpreting information (ex 9)

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ISBN 9781108465274

Here, students practise critical thinking by analysing ideas and information around keeping pets. By asking 'who makes a stronger case and why' (exercise D) they practise evaluating arguments and justifying their decisions.

12.4 MAN'S BEST FRIEND?

LESSON OBJECTIVE
- write a pros and cons analysis about keeping pets

1 LISTENING

A **PAIR WORK** Look at the pictures. What are the dogs doing in each picture? What kinds of relationship do these animals have with people?

B 🔊 **2.53** Listen to a debate about people and their dogs. Who mentions the dogs in the pictures, Kenan or Lucia? What do they say about them? Are their opinions positive or negative?

C 🔊 **2.54** **PAIR WORK** **LISTEN FOR EXAMPLES** Both Kenan and Lucia use examples to support their arguments. Listen to the extracts and write the phrases you hear to introduce examples.

1 _____*For instance, …*_____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____

D **PAIR WORK** **THINK CRITICALLY** Who do you think made a stronger case, the affirmative side (Kenan) or the opposition (Lucia)? Why? What was the strongest point in their argument?

We liked Lucia's argument, but her point about service dogs wasn't relevant. The topic is about pets.

E Think about your culture and its attitude towards dogs. What is their role in society? Do you agree with that role? Why or why not? For ideas, watch Alessandra's video.

REAL STUDENT

Do you agree with Alessandra?

Further Reading

For more information on this topic, please see:

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives.* New York: Longman.

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Butterworth, J., Thwaites, J., & Thwaites, G. (2008). *Thinking skills.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: a restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process.* Boston: DC Heath and Company.

Ennis R.H. (2015). Critical thinking: A streamlined conception. In M. Davies & R. Barnett (Eds.) *The Palgrave handbook of critical thinking in higher education.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

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Fisher, A. (2011). Critical thinking: *An introduction* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Language Research Team,
Cambridge University Press

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A framework to develop skills for life

You can find information about the other competencies in the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework at **cambridge.org/clcf**

✓ Creative Thinking

✓ Critical Thinking

✓ Learning to Learn

✓ Communication

✓ Collaboration

✓ Social Responsibilities

✓ Emotional Development