



Anne

My name is Anne Wesemann and I'm responsible for the design and production of distance learning courses. Critical thinking is the ability to take a piece of knowledge and analyse that piece of knowledge by its strengths and weaknesses, and then be able to assess how far that knowledge is useful or correct or valid.

Without critical thinking, we would gain the knowledge as it stands, but we would never move on. We would never explore.

Some students feel they're being disrespectful when they are critical of the work they're given. By pulling apart strengths and weaknesses they are showing their understanding of the subject area.

Good critical thinking starts by not just believing what you're given, but reading around it. So a student can really show that they've grasped the subject area when they can rephrase these aspects, and be critical of them in the way that they combine the arguments in a different way: that they bring in new sources to show that they've read additional material.

Sometimes students give us some sort of discussion between two sources. So they say, "Author A says this; author B says this," and they keep going like this. But what it doesn't give us is that it doesn't show us that the student has understood those arguments. So the second step is missing: the student's own input and their analysis of both arguments.

Many non-native speakers take the expert opinion for granted and don't dare criticize it. Whereas actually, with their background, they can use that prior experience to criticise, and restructure, and rethink what they're given from their own experience.

Critical thinking impacts grades hugely, because the student shows that they have taken in the knowledge they've been provided with; that they've worked with the material; and that they can add to that.

Go the distance.