

Enhancing Critical Thinking Tip #5

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Enhancing Critical Thinking: Tip #5

ASK LEADING QUESTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS VOCALIZE THEIR THOUGHT PROCESSES AND DISCOVER WHERE ERRORS IN THOUGHT OCCUR.

- *What would you do first?*
- *What would you do next?*
- *Is there another way to do this?*
- *How would you _____ this?*
- *What conclusions can you draw?*

Scenario: In addition to a college scholarship application, students are to submit a one-page essay responding to the following: “How will the scholarship assist you in attaining your goal? Share any unique experience or qualities that may distinguish you from other deserving candidates.” The teacher asks leading questions to help students vocalize their thought processes and discover where errors in thought occur before writing their first draft.

T: Before you start writing your essay, let’s examine the questions carefully and look for key words.

Ann: Goal.

Sam: Unique experience.

Tom: Qualities that distinguish you from other candidates.

T: Good! So how would you go about writing your essay? ***What would you do first?***

Ann: I need to know what my goal is.

T: And what is your goal?

Ann: My goal is to get a college degree.

Sam: Shouldn’t goals be more specific, like college degree in accounting, for example?

T: That’s a good point, Sam.

OK, let’s say you now have a specific goal. ***What would you do next?***

Tom: The question asks me how the scholarship will help me attain my goal. I guess I’ll make a list of ways the scholarship can help me reach my goal.

T: ***Is there another way to do this?***

Sam: I would do it differently. I would work backwards.

T: ***Can you be more specific?***

Sam: My goal is to be able to help teenagers with psychological issues. But in order for me to do that, I would need training in psychology, which means I would need a college degree in psychology. Since I don’t have college money, I would need scholarship money, which eventually would help me reach my ultimate goal.

T: That’s a good example of critical thinking, Sam.

Now, the next question asks you to distinguish yourself from other deserving candidates. ***How would you do this?***

Ann: I would list my strong qualities that would make me stand out.

T: ***Can you give me an example?***

Ann: I can say that I am self-motivated to succeed. I know what I want in life and I would do whatever it takes to get it. In this case, it's a college degree in journalism.

T: That's good. Now, ***what conclusion can you draw*** from this process of writing a scholarship essay?

Tom: It's not that easy. It takes too much brain energy just thinking about what to write.

Ann: I think that talking about it with each other first gives us a clearer perspective on the best way to write our essay.

Sam: For me, I think that working backwards helps me focus on the steps I need to take to get me to my destination. It helps me in the organization of my thoughts and ideas.

T: Good. Now you can start writing your first draft.