



# Thinking Clearly and Logically

**Thinking Clearly—choosing logical steps that you can use to think through a problem or task.**

- ◆ Get ready—you're always getting "ready." Your lifestyle, mental background, and immediate circumstances establish your readiness.
  - Lifestyle—regular sleep, exercise, and a healthy diet clears and energizes your mind. Nicotine, alcohol, and other drugs cloud your mind.
  - Mental Background—enrich your mental storehouse by developing good habits. Talk with interesting people, read an interesting book, spend time in thought, record thoughts in a journal, continue to learn.
  - Immediate circumstances—respect deadlines. Frame your tasks in time so you can prod yourself to get on the job. Solitude and silence are important to most thinkers. Look for a place and time free of distractions. Keep a notebook or recorder nearby for notes and thoughts.
- ◆ Get Set—square off to meet the challenge. Use the following steps to meet the challenge:
  - Identify your challenge—What is your thinking supposed to accomplish? Are you writing to solve a problem—explore a concept—arrive at a decision? Once you've decided what you want to accomplish, accept the challenge. Take responsibility for the outcome. You'll find that you'll begin to focus your energy and begin to form constructive thinking patterns.
  - Clarify your purpose—What is the purpose? Understanding the value of the effort helps you to achieve what has to be done. Be sure to think your way through the purpose of your letter or summary.
  - Get rid of mental hang-ups—Watch out for the following hang-ups:
    - Emotional hangover—When upset, don't let it carry over and interfere with your thinking.
    - Personality conflicts—conflicts with peers, supervisors and others can come between you and your task. Set the conflicts aside, and focus your thoughts on the matter at hand.
    - Stock opinions—our minds are full of ideas we accept without proof. Examine these stock opinions. Do they interfere with your interpretation of the facts?
    - Peer pressure—are there pressures at the office encouraging you to take the "path of least resistance?" Is the organizational culture one that values mediocrity? What can you do to apply yourself to the challenge?
- ◆ Think (clearly)—the basic thinking moves are classified according to level of complexity. You can't perform the complex thinking operations without some understanding of those that precede that particular level. The levels are:
  - Knowledge—recalling learned material
  - Comprehension—understanding the material
  - Application—using the learning material
  - Analysis—breaking the material down for increased understanding
  - Synthesis—reshaping the material into a new form or composition

Evaluation—judging the worth of the material.

**Thinking logically—“The best argument is that which seems merely an explanation.”  
(Dale Carnegie)**

- ◆ Decide (first) the direction of travel between reason and conclusion. Inductive reasoning leads from observable facts to a general conclusion. *The child has assorted bruises in various stages of healing . . . the child has a recent black eye . . . the child has probably been subjected to on-going abuse.* Deductive reasoning starts with a specific premise and applies it to a specific case in order to arrive at a conclusion about that case. *Most young children who have been badly abused will not move when placed in an uncomfortable position . . . the above child was badly abused over a course of time . . . this child would likely be posturally compliant.*
- ◆ When you must organize your thoughts into a formal “argument” and possibly defend them against others, there are a series of steps to follow in writing summaries, dictation, petitions, and letters. The steps are as follows:
  1. Decide on your purpose.
  2. Gather information related to your issue
  3. Construct a central claim you can defend
  4. All qualifiers (some, might, most, typically, in most cases, etc.) to make your position easier to defend.
  5. Support your central claim with minor claims. Back up claims of fact with observation, records, calculations, and expert testimony. Back up claims of value with comparisons, experience, analysis, and demonstration. Back up claims of policy with precedent, expert testimony, and comparison.
  6. Use further evidence to reinforce the support.
  7. Explain why the supports warrant acceptance as evidence. A warrant is a “mini-argument” within the larger argument. Often it’s so obvious, it doesn’t need stated, but be prepared to state and defend a warrant.
  8. Consider possible objections to your plan
  9. Make concessions to the strongest objections. When your argument or position has some weaknesses, be prepared to admit it. They are lost points anyhow.
  10. Make a clear rebuttal of weaker points.
  11. Refine your central claim
  12. Reaffirm your central claim
  13. Urge it’s acceptance

Source: Writers Inc, Sebranek, Meyer, and Kemper, 1992