

Critical Thinking

Points to consider when writing

1. Exploring the problem:
 - A. Who is your reader?
 - B. What is your purpose?
2. Making your goals operational:
 - A. How can you achieve your purpose?
 - B. Can you make a plan?
3. Generating some ideas:
 - A. Brainstorm:
 - keep writing
 - don't censor or evaluate
 - keep returning to the problem
 - B. Talk to your readers:
 - What questions would they ask?
 - What different kinds of readers might you have?
 - C. Ask yourself questions:
 - Journalistic questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? So What?
4. Classical topics (patterns of argument):
 - A. Definition:
 - How does the dictionary define ____?
 - What do I mean by ____?
 - What group of things does ____ belong to?
 - How is ____ different from other things?
 - What parts can ____ be divided into?
 - What other words mean about the same as ____?
 - What are some concrete examples of ____?
 - When is the meaning of ____ misunderstood?
 - B. Comparison/Contrast:
 - What is ____ similar to? In what ways?
 - What is ____ different from? In what ways?
 - ____ is superior (inferior) to what? How?
 - ____ is most unlike (like) what? How?
 - C. Relationship:
 - What causes ____?
 - What are the effects of ____?
 - What is the purpose of ____?
 - What is the consequence of ____?
 - What comes before (after) ____?

D. Testimony:

- What have I heard people say about ____?
- What are some facts of statistics about ____?
- Can I quote any poems or sayings about ____?
- Are there any laws about ____?

E. Circumstance:

- Is ____ possible or impossible?
- What qualities or conditions make ____ possible or impossible?
- When did ____ happen previously?
- Who can do ____?
- If ____ starts, what makes it end?
- What would it take for ____ to happen now?
- What would prevent ____ from happening?

5. Cubing (considering a subject from six points of view):

- A. Describe it (colors, shapes, sizes, etc.)
- B. Compare it (What is it similar to?)
- C. Associate it (What does it make you think of?)
- D. Analyze it (Tell how it's made)
- E. Apply it (What can you do with it? How can it be used?)
- F. Argue for or against it