

ThinkTalk

An activity pack to help children aged 5-7 to become Critical Thinkers

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During recent years there has been an increased awareness of the importance of encouraging children of all age groups to think more and be involved in the decision-making process. There are many different models of Thinking Skills offered to practitioners. This pack specifically addresses the processes of Critical Thinking and provides teachers with structured materials which should support pupils to develop the processes involved in being able to think critically. The authors, who have been involved in writing material and teaching Critical Thinking to different age groups have evidence that the processes involved in Critical Thinking – analysis, interpretation, reasoning, evaluating and making rational decisions – should enhance the learning process of all children.



What is Critical Thinking?

Critical Thinking involves encouragement of sensible decision making and evaluation of what to believe and do. It also develops logic and reasoning skills. Critical Thinking processes also help children to enhance the quality of their learning in any context and subject areas as well as in everyday life. The activities, which are based on research and theory, tell us that activities which involve Critical Thinking and discussion help children to become more confident and fluent, as well as help them with their learning in other contexts. Similar activities have been shown to help children from socially deprived areas. *The activities which are suitable to be used with all children:*

- are set in contexts which are familiar to children of the age group (5 to 7 years)
- are open-ended so that children should be able to produce a range of outcomes from the activities
- encourage children to think deeply, reason, reflect and accept different points of view
- persuade others with well-constructed arguments.

The contents of the pack

The pack contains a general introduction which explains the aims of the pack and offers clear guidance on how to use it with children. There are 20 Brain Buzzes which are warm-up problem solving activities and involve reasoning and logic, as well as 20 main activities in the pack. The book is photo-copiable and all the activities are also provided in **colour** on a CD ROM. Our recommendation is that the activities are used with pupils weekly or fortnightly.

Example of pack contents

✓ Brain Buzes

1. If Monday was a colour, what colour would it be? Why? What about other days of the week?

4. Which one would you choose: 10p a day pocket money for a week, or 1p on the first day, 2p on the second day, 4p on the third day, 8p on the fourth day, and so on? You might need to write down some numbers for this (or ask your teacher to help you with writing).*

✓ Activity 2

Do you agree?

Talk about each of these statements with your partner and decide whether you agree or disagree with them. You don't have to think the same as your partner. Try to think of reasons why you agree or disagree.

- Children should be allowed to go to bed at a time they choose.
- You should do everything your friend tells you to.
- Children should only have five toys to play with at a time.
- When you find something difficult at school, you should go to the teacher straight away.
- If you make a mistake, it means you are not clever.
- If you lose a game, it is OK to feel angry.
- Sports keep you healthy.

 **Vocabulary**
Clever, mistake, anger,
healthy, choice.



✓ Activity 19

What makes a good leader?

Imagine that your teacher wants to choose someone from your class to be in charge of the Book Corner. They will be responsible for keeping the books tidy, and for telling other people in the class how to use the Book Corner properly.

To help the teacher decide who should be the Book Monitor, everyone has to write down why they think they should be chosen. Imagine these are some of the reasons the children came up with:

- "I like telling people what to do."
- "I love reading books."
- "I'm really good at tidying up."
- "I've got the loudest voice in the class."
- "I listen to people."
- "I have a really cool bag."
- "I'm the oldest in the class."
- "I'm really good at football."
- "I'm the tallest in the class."

Who do you think should be chosen? Can you say why?

Think of a leader you know: maybe your football coach or your dance teacher.

- What makes them a good leader?
- How do they make children listen to them and follow their instructions?
- Do you think you would make a good leader?



The Authors

Sally Paggetti has been a teacher for 25 years, 13 of those as an Advanced Skills Teacher, specialising in developing teaching strategies and programmes for enriching student learning. She is an expert on teaching Critical Thinking skills to secondary school students and, recently, has focussed on developing Critical Thinking skills in younger children.

Valsa Koshy has worked on several projects for enriching children's learning as a Professor of Education at Brunel University. A significant part of her research has focused on supporting children from socially disadvantaged areas such as students with high potential in inner-city areas and very young children. Through her own research and from many years of reviewing expert literature, Valsa is a firm believer in the role of developing Critical Thinking, reasoning and problem solving in enhancing younger children's learning, confidence and achievement.