

Critical Thinking: ***Forming an Informed Opinion***

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What is critical thinking?

- “Critical thinking is one important way of engaging with the subject matter of your course. It involves *considering different points of view* and *alternative interpretations* and then entering into a *critical dialogue or debate* with the material you are studying”. *Skills4Study*



The realities of study!



Questions and answers

- We are constantly surrounded by information
- Where do you find information or answers to questions?



Methods for answering questions*

- Intuition
 - What do I think?
- Authority
 - What does someone who knows think?
- Rationalism
 - What does logic or reason suggest?
- Empiricism
 - What do the available data suggest?



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*Hughes (1999)

All methods have strengths and limitations ...

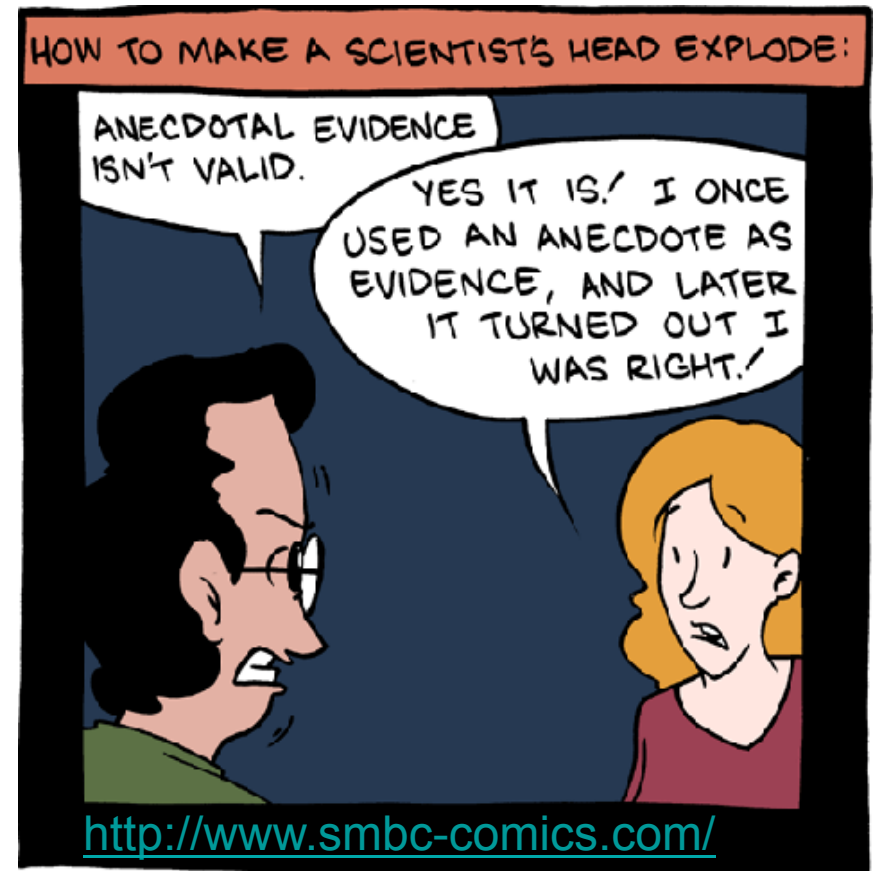
- Intuition
 - Authority
 - Rationalism
 - Empiricism
- Can you identify possible issues in these methods?



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Somebody told me ...

- Sometimes considered as anecdotal evidence
- But who is the source?
- Self fulfilling?
- I know someone who ...



Answers in the media



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The Irish Times - Tuesday, February 23, 2010

First child can break rather than make marriage - study

CAROL COULTER Legal Affairs Editor

HAVING A child can break rather than make a marriage, new research has found. Family life has found.



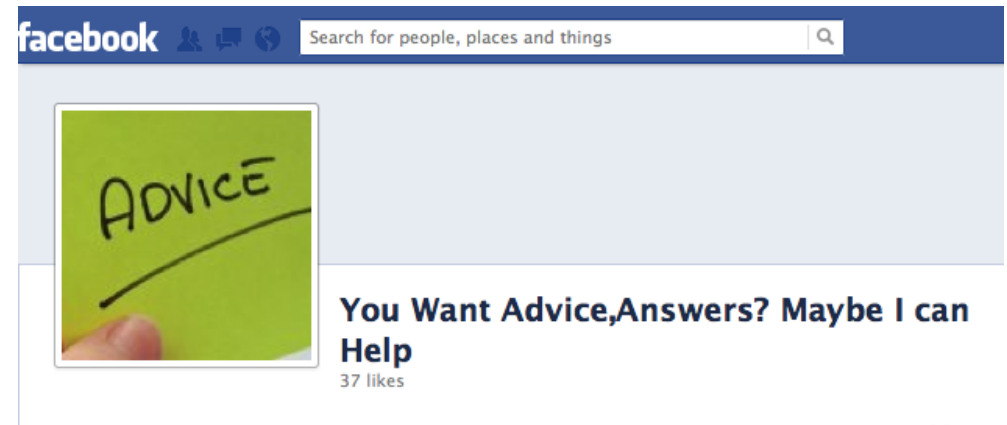
Study suggests that prejudice among potential employers prevents homeless from getting work

Updated: 07:51, Wednesday, 3 October 2012

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A report suggests that "perceived prejudice among potential employers" is one of the main reasons why long-term homeless people are unable to get work.

Answers in social media

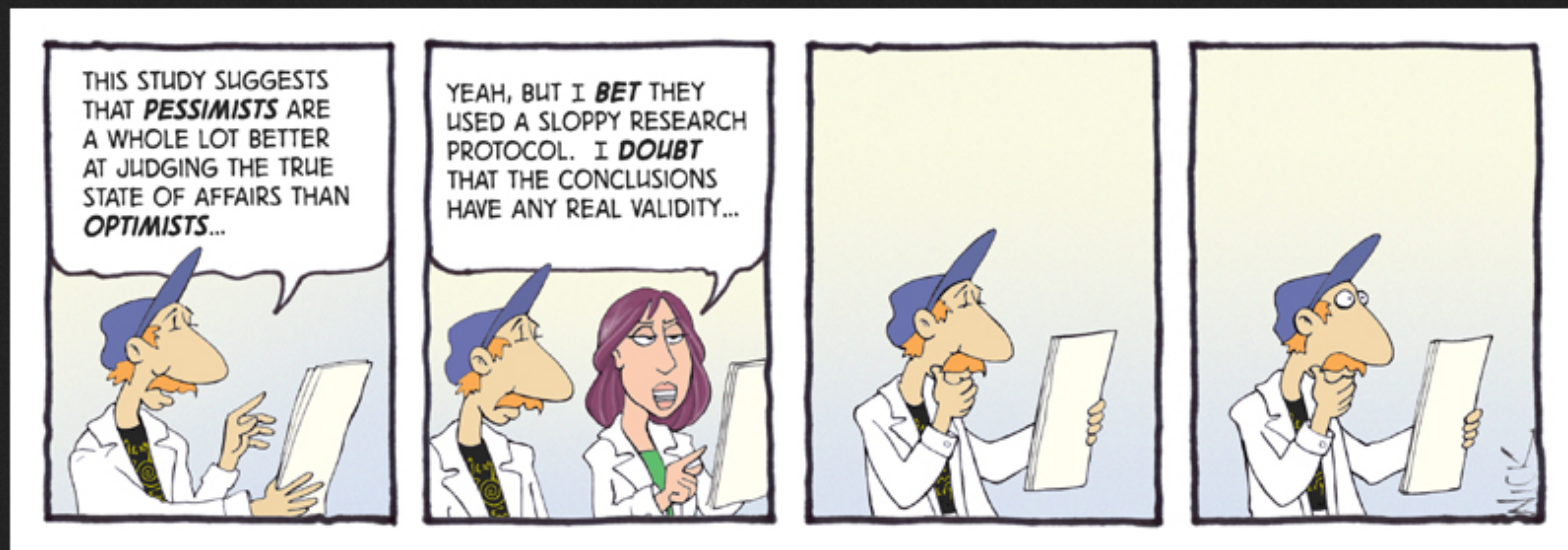


Answer from Research

Research is an important source of evidence

BUT ...

Important to be confident evaluating the quality of evidence, and the quality of research

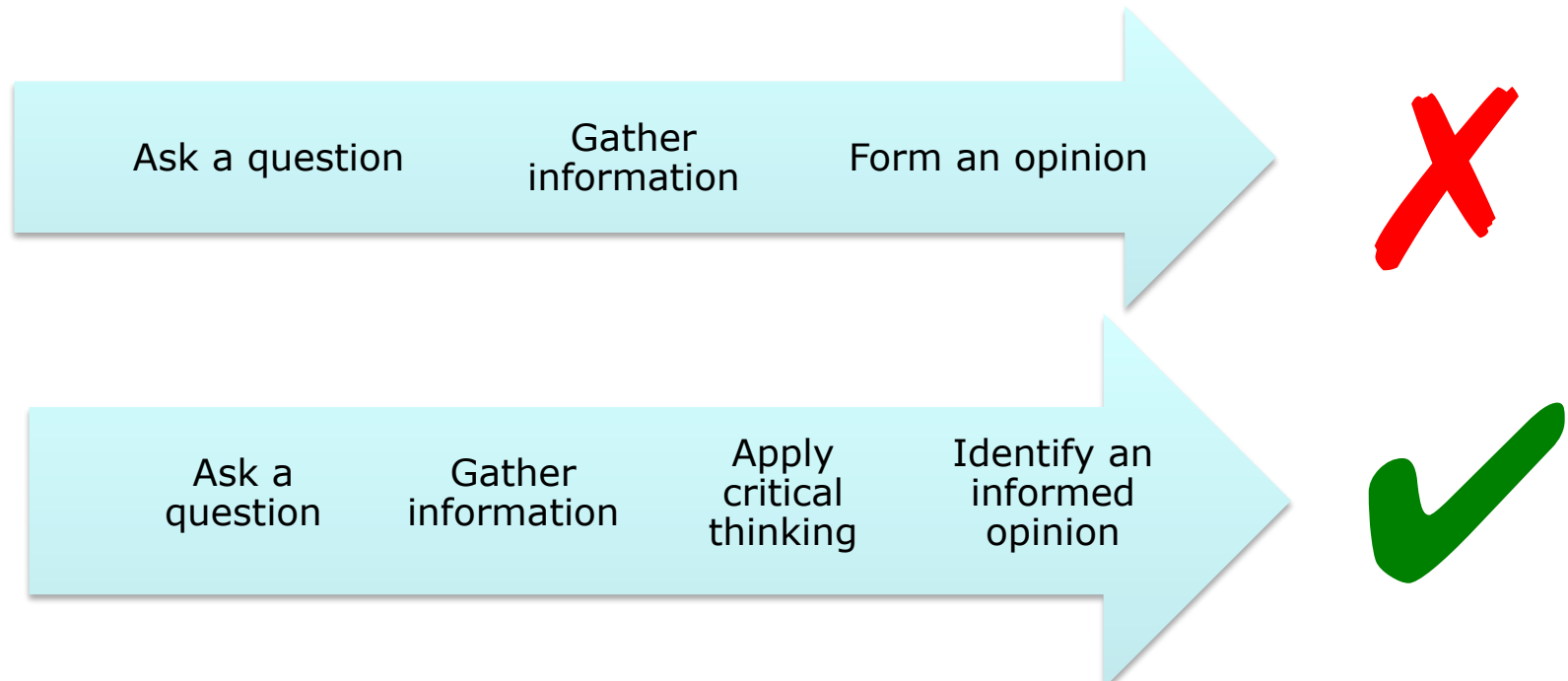


Need a method of judging the information you gather!



The role of critical thinking

- “Skills in critical thinking bring precision to the way you think and work” (Cottrell, 2005, p.4)
- Provides you with a basis to evaluate the different types of information
- Helps turn an opinion into an informed opinion



Taking a Critical View Means...

- not taking things you read (or hear) at face value
- never taking an assumption for granted
- asking questions (of people and of texts)
- being thoughtful
- finding information
- understanding different approaches and arguments
- understanding the evidence used to support an argument
- using questions, arguments and evidence in your writing



(Williams, 2009 p. viii)

Elements of critical thinking

- Identifying other people's positions
- Evaluating the evidence for other views
- Weighing up different positions fairly
- Being able to read between the lines
- Reflecting on issues in a structured way
- Drawing conclusions based on good evidence
- Presenting your opinion clearly and in a reasoned way



Cottrell, 2005, p.2

Some Questions to Ask

- *What is the main opinion, message or claim being presented in the information?*
- *What or who is the source of this claim?*
- *What type of evidence is being used to support the opinion or argument?*
 - *With research evidence – what type of research is it?*
- *How valid or reliable (trustworthy) is the evidence?*
- *What are the strengths and limitations of the evidence being used?*
 - *Are there potential sources of bias?*
- *Are there possible alternative explanations?*
- *What is the most likely conclusion based on the evidence?*



After Egan et al

Resources



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+ Writing skills

+ Referencing and plagiarism

+ Exam skills

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skills4studycampus is an interactive e-learning resource, focusing on the core study skills you'll need for success on your course, which have been adapted from *The Study Skills Handbook* by Stella Cottrell. It offers you a stimulating mix of activities, practice and reflection to help you learn, develop and accelerate your study skills!

To find out more about skills4studycampus (including instructions on how to use the resource), click 'Help and FAQs' in the top right-hand corner of this page. Or, to get stuck in, select a module from the menu on the left-hand side of the screen.

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Tip of the day

 **Critically reading your own work**

Even as a student, you have readers. Your tutors or examiners will take a critical

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What's new?

 Your diary is an invaluable tool for planning your time and keeping track of commitments. In **Effective diary-keeping** we look at how you can use your diary to

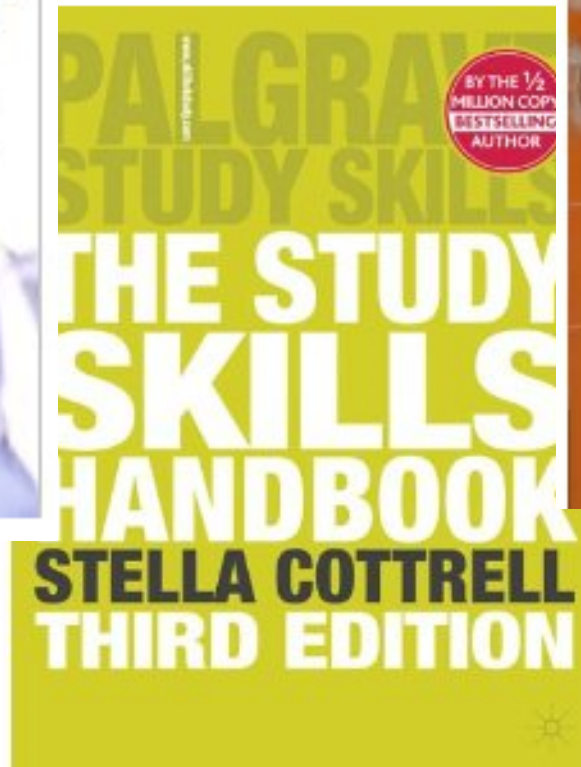
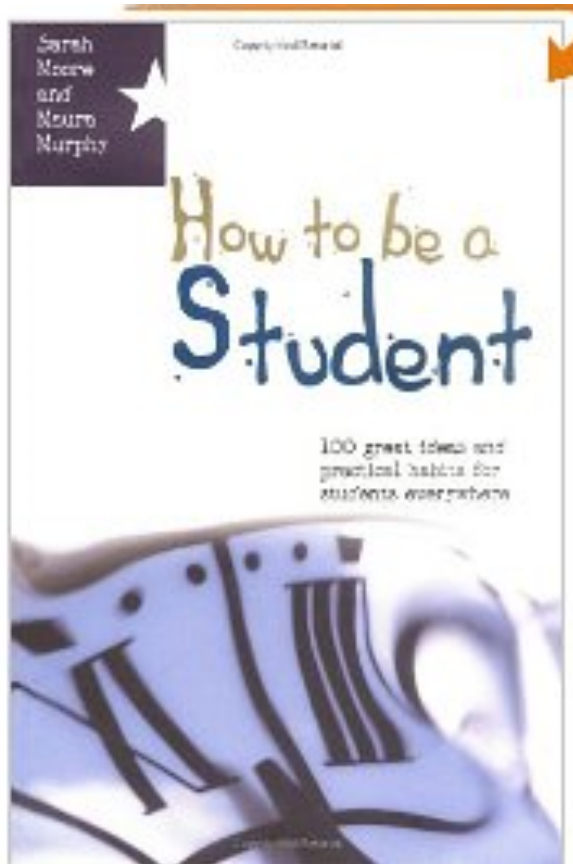
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Buy 'The Study Skills Handbook' by Stella Cottrell

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Resources



Rules to live by ...

- Take the time to weigh up information
- Look for other possible views
- Be aware of the quality of the source

