

# MANAGEMENT OUTLOOK



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 5

## 7 RULES FOR SHARPENING YOUR THINKING SKILLS



Every day we're flooded with information from all sorts of sources. The problem is often information from one source contradicts that from another.

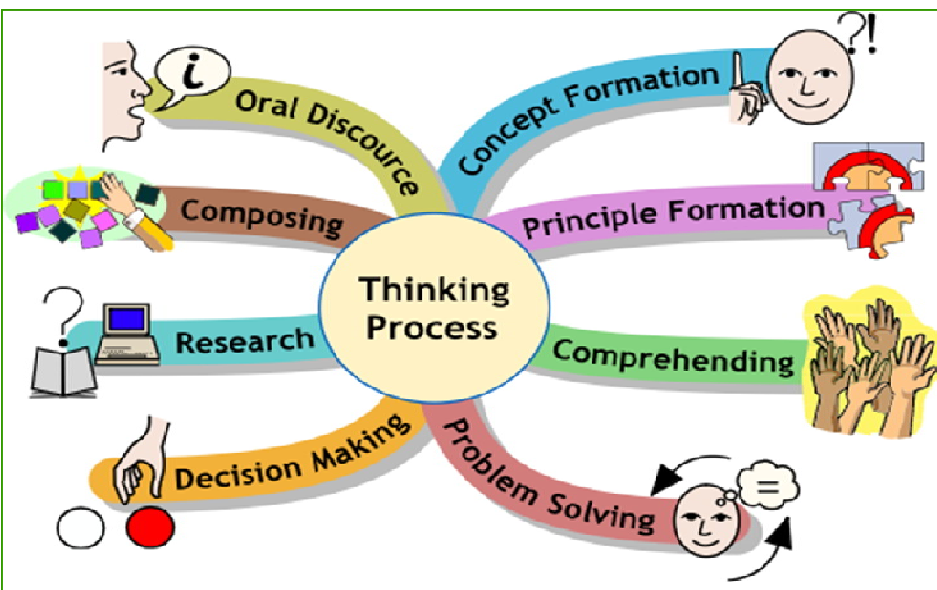
In such a world, learning how to think for yourself should be one of the primary goals of every person. Of course, most people believe they already have this skill in spades. But becoming a sharp thinker is an ongoing process - an aim that's never fully realized. Just in case your skills need a bit of brushing up, here are some good strategies for doing so.

### 1) Have a healthy level of skepticism

**THINK LOGICAL, BELIEVE IN FACTS, EVIDENCES AND CAUSE & EFFECT RELATION**

Scepticism is the belief that knowledge is very difficult to obtain. As an attitude, it means believing that any new idea presented to you is false until reasonable evidence is provided that it's true. **Don't trust new information at its face value.** Instead, dissect it carefully before accepting it. If someone states they can teach you superhuman powers, make you rich quickly, or help you lose weight without much effort, you should be extremely sceptical. Make them present plenty of evidence to back such claims up.

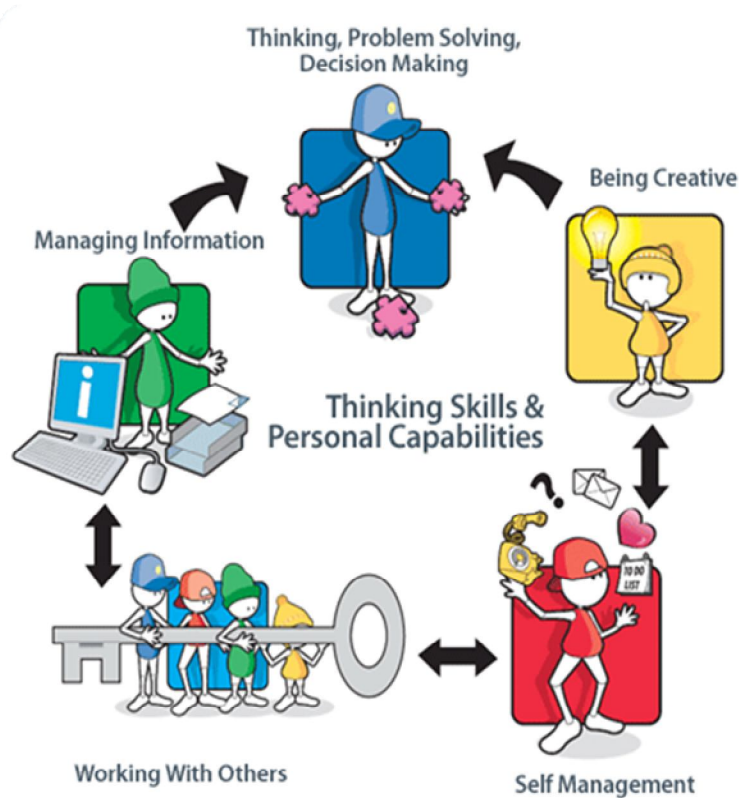
*“A man can do what a man has done before. Nobody is perfect. Be ready to change your ideas & beliefs, to reach the next level”*



2) Look for hard data, not assumptions, arguments and conclusions

**MUST HAVE OBJECTIVITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA, VERIFIED DATA**

Data is raw information about the world. It should be the starting point for any argument or conclusion. If someone tries to present an idea to you without credible, objective data to back it up, you should not accept it as truth until such data is forthcoming. The best data is completely objective, such as "Mike is 2 meters tall". It should not contain value judgments like "Mike is a great guy" or "Staff in that store can't be trusted". Data must be verifiable from more than one unrelated source before it can be considered of reliable quality.



4) Look for and verify assumptions

**CARRY AN ATTITUDE OF EXPLORING THINGS, EXPERIMENTATION**

An assumption is data to back up an argument that isn't explicitly stated. Any argument has assumptions, simply because we as humans are unable to know everything. Even the conclusions presented by science have in-built assumptions that can't be proven. Most scientific facts are verified by experiment, but no experiment is perfect. No matter how many times you test a hypothesis, you can't test it

3) If there's not enough data then no conclusion can be formed

**BE TRUE TO YOURSELF, ACCEPTABILITY OF SIMPLICITY**

There are lots of things in the universe that we simply can't confirm. In cases where there's not enough data to form a conclusion, "I don't know" is the only acceptable answer. This is a very difficult point for many people to accept. It seems to be human nature to believe that any answer is better than no answer. Such an attitude is just plain wrong. If you don't know answer of any question, accept it simply rather than playing with words.



under every condition. Sooner or later, you must assume that just because it works under a certain number of conditions, it will work under all. Science also assumes that the future will continue to look like the past. There's no implicit reason to believe, for example, that just because gravity has worked one way every time it's ever been tested up to now, it will continue to do so in the future. Before accepting any argument, you should probe its assumptions to see how credible they are. Here's an example of how to examine assumptions:

Fred: "One day, our machines may become so intelligent that they decide to kill us all."  
 Alice: "Why would machines want to deliberately kill us?"  
 Fred: "And so they can rule the world without our interfering."  
 Alice: "Why would machines want to rule the world. What would be their motive?"  
 Fred: "And so they can never be switched off."  
 Alice: "Machines don't seem to care if we switch them off today. What makes you think that will change?" And so on.

**5) Look for circumstances where the conclusion may be found false**

**USE YOUR MENTAL SKILLS, BRUSH YOUR MENTAL ABILITIES, MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH OF OBSERVING THINGS, URGE TO EXAMINE THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE FACT, ATTITUDE OF CYCLICAL THINKING, LINKING UP THINGS AND COMPREHENDING THINGS FROM ALL ANGLES**

If you can see cases where a particular conclusion may be right, now rack your brain to find a circumstance under which it may be wrong. If you can't find one, you're probably not trying hard enough. For example, if someone says "All English people like pop music", try to find an example of an English person who's explicitly stated he doesn't like pop music. If you accept that something's right, challenge yourself by looking for others who disagree. Give their views a fair hearing and use them to examine your own beliefs.

**6) Make strong attempts to overcome your biases**

**WIDER OUTLOOK, NO RIGID OR BIASED ATTITUDE, SOUNDNESS OF BRAIN WITH POLITENESS & HUMBLENESS**

Everyone has biases which affect their judgement. You should try to suspend yours, as much as possible, while evaluating new information. Initially approach anything new in a humble manner, recognizing that it's impossible you could know everything and be always right. Give the information a fair hearing based on the data presented, and keep your particular world-view out of it.

**7) Be willing to change your conclusions in the face of new data**

**APPRAISE CRITICISM, FLEXIBILITY IN ORGANISING & DEVELOPING IDEAS**

Legendary economist John Maynard Keynes, upon being accused of inconsistency, once said: "When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?" This is an admirable attitude to have. We're all just imperfect mortals forming conclusions with only a shred of the data we really need to do so. Accept that you'll often hold ideas and beliefs that are wrong. Be ready to change those ideas and beliefs when the world tells you that the time has come to do so.

**So these are rules for improving your critical thinking and sharpening up your mind skills. They help you form better conclusions about the world.**

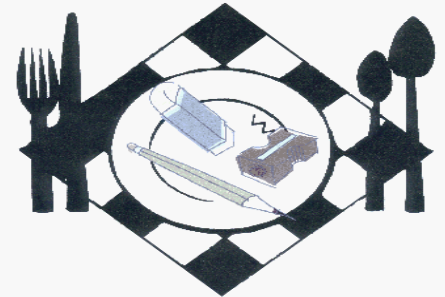




# 9 WRITING EXERCISES TO HONE YOUR WRITING SKILLS



## Recipe for Writing



Writing Activities for the FACS Classroom

The three essential ways to hone your writing skills is to write, write more, and write endlessly. Some writers tend to believe in the so-called "writer's block" wherein a writer would face a blank wall whenever he/she would try to open or explore a certain avenue of thought. **Whereas writing when inspired provides a sure way of getting your mind to work and produce a literary piece, it also paves a way to mental idleness and writing hiatus.** There is really no problem if you need to be inspired to be able to write, just make sure that you're always inspired so you keep coming up with what you're expected to do as a writer. Otherwise, you're making yourself susceptible to the relative power of "writer's block."

A writer needs to write - inspired or not. **Writing is your craft and your mind is your tool. To keep it sharp, useful, and productive, you need to use it as often as you can by engaging in regular writing exercises. Just as a daily physical workout can strengthen your body, regular writing exercises can also keep your mind healthy and prolific as your writing skills are enhanced.** Here are a few effective exercises to give your writer's mind a regular energizing boost.

### 1. Write whatever comes to mind

Focus on creating a real-time free-flowing narrative of anything that you actually feel and think. It would be best if you allow yourself a certain period (1 to 3 minutes) to do this. After setting the stopwatch, write anything that comes to mind - without stopping, without editing. Once the time's up, stop completely and allow your mind to rest by closing your eyes for a minute or two. Set your writing aside and just look at it after around 5 to 10 minutes or when your mind is fully relaxed.

The challenge in this writing exercise lies in the need **to be creative and unique.** As the topic is quite popular, many writers would tend to write about it. So you have to tap on your creativity to come up with a piece that bears your distinct signature for it to shine and be noticed. You may engage in this writing activity as a mere writing exercise, or for submission purposes. However, it would be best to do it with both objectives in mind as you would take extra effort in making it acceptable, unique, and impressive.

## 2. Present a certain topic from different viewpoints

Consider a topic then view it from a certain angle and write about it. Then look at it and write about it from another standpoint. Or you may view something from various people's perspectives, i.e. marriage through the eyes of an old man or through those of a child. This exercise aims to **develop your unbiased perceptive skills** to enable you to write objectively; and to help you **develop an investigative mind** that doesn't rest on just one angle.

## 3. Create, describe, and/or animate a character

if you're into storytelling, this exercise helps you enhance your skills of making your characters leap from the pages. But even if you're not, this writing exercise will enable you to **be extra attentive to details, develop your imagination**, and hold your readers' interest toward the end. You may do this by describing in details someone close to you - a person or a pet. You could even describe a plant or an inanimate object which you want to enliven and characterize.

## 4. Make inferences

Consider an idea then infer something based on it and expound on it. You could either take a specific idea, then draw it out to be viewed in the light of the general idea you could create out of it (**inductive inference**); or derive a specific idea from the main one and write about it (**deductive inference**). This exercise helps to **develop your logical abilities** in writing as well as your **accuracy in analyzing and presenting a given idea**.

## 5. Paraphrase a short paragraph two to three times

Write a short paragraph of about a hundred words then rewrite it two to three times. Rewriting should not just be a mere substitution of words using a thesaurus, but it should involve a complete restructuring of the paragraph without losing its idea. This exercise is useful in **honing your vocabulary skills** as well as your ability to create well-constructed paragraphs.

## 6. Relive a certain experience

Think of any experience you wish to relive and write about it. It may be as simple as your regular work day, or as dramatic as a life-changing event. This writing exercise helps you **develop your objectivity and recollection skills; enhance your memory; and**

**improve your ability to concentrate, pay attention to details, and describe your thoughts** and emotions associated with that experience.

## 7. Write on an unknown or unpopular subject

Introduce a topic that's either unknown to many or generally considered dull. Make it known, live it up, and make it interesting to those who are not in the least interested. This exercise will **hone your ability to apply colors to an otherwise dull portrait**, and enliven a generally considered lifeless subject.

## 8. Review and analyze a literary piece or a work of art

Writing a review requires you to have an open mind, be objective, and express whatever biases you may have. It may allow you to be subjective at a certain level, but you need to be explicit whether a certain view you're presenting is from your own standpoint only or from a general point of view. This exercise will **develop your objectivity as a writer, as well as your analytical skills**. It will also enable you to **hone your ability to express precisely** what your take is on a certain piece.

## 9. Describe a specific scene or place

You could do it while waiting at a busy airport or a train station filled with people. **Be observant, have a keen eye for details, and describe what you see in your mind**. You need not write it down, just focus in making up a mental description of the scene around you and your reaction to it using picturesque words and interesting phrases. This exercise helps to **develop your concentration skills and attentiveness to details, enhance your mental construction ability and sharpen your memory** as you need to remember what you have mentally created to be typed out or written at the soonest opportunity.

**“Good Writing skills is the heart of Effective Communication. It is a key to open your mind, process your thinking, good presentation, healthy conversation & personality development. It develops an attitude of explaining complex things in a simple understandable manner to others. Your Pen is your weapon, you can write enriched essays, abstracts, articles & research papers if you practice these writing exercises.”**