

Making Critical Thinking Click: Practical Strategies for First-Generation Students

Asia Pace

Assistant Director for First-Gen
Student Success Initiatives



G1GOV
FIRST GENERATION

In pairs or small groups: think of a time you had to figure something out without explicit instructions.

1. How did it feel to figure that out on your own?
2. Did you feel confident, frustrated, uncertain?
3. What helped you make sense of the situation?
4. Did you ask others? Look for resources? Use trial and error?
5. Did you feel like you had all the information you needed, or did you have to make decisions with incomplete info?
6. How long did it take you to get comfortable or confident in what you were doing?



1. Now think about a student who is experiencing this kind of uncertainty regularly — maybe every class or assignment. How might that affect their confidence or motivation?
2. How do you think it might feel for a first-generation student who hasn't had prior experience “figuring it out” in an academic environment?



What is Critical Thinking?

the ability to:

- Identify and clearly understand a problem or question
- Gather and evaluate relevant information or evidence
- Consider multiple perspectives or possible solutions
- Make reasoned, well-justified decisions or conclusions
- Reflect on your reasoning process and outcomes to improve future thinking



Why it Matters

- At APSU, a first-generation student is defined as a student whose parents/guardians have not completed a four-year degree, regardless of the student's sibling educational attainment.
 - 35.4% >
 - 40.8%
- What do you think these numbers represent?
- Critical thinking is an assumed skill that is not often taught explicitly.



Barriers to Critical Thinking



Barriers to Critical Thinking

- rote memorization
- lack of skill
- lack of knowledge
- lack of practice
- lack of confidence
- education infrastructure
- limited access to mentors or role models



Breaking it down

1. Identify the problem/question
2. Gather & consider information
3. Evaluate options
4. Make & justify a decision
5. Reflect on the process



Reflection on the process

- What steps came naturally?
- Which needed more thought?
- How could you model these for students?



Redesign a class task or assignment

- Choose one current assignment
- Adapt it to make the critical thinking steps explicit
- Share one change with a partner or your group



Asia Pace
paceak@apsu.edu

**Thank you for
your time!**



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