

How Critical Thinkers do Academics (...Well!)

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Critical thinkers...

- ...learn by **understanding**
 - ...and realize that they first, and naturally, did this in areas about which they were passionate
- ...understand by **exploring multiple facets** of each topic, such as...
 - concepts, processes, and roles
 - components, contributors, and relationships
 - similarities and differences
 - sequences and sizes
 - pros and cons
 - causes, reasons, results, products, and effects
- ...**identify holes in their understanding** while actively reading/listening/practicing/studying
- ...**fight to fill those holes** from available resources (because no one else can do it for them...)
 - instructors (strive to learn how they *think!*)
 - course materials
 - classmates
 - internet, library
 - tutors
- ...**track all of their graded course events** on their calendar (with alarms set!)
- ...**manage their moments**, using otherwise wasted time to fight for understanding
 - ...doing all of the necessary prep to make using those moments possible & productive
- ...plan ahead for inevitable absences and late-night questions by **building classmate networks**
- ...**test their understanding by explaining** topics in their own words
 - ...and working new practice problems (as applicable)
- ...**can teach what they have learned** to classmates and friends
- ...**prepare for every test as if it was an essay exam, even if it won't be one**
- ...enter and leave examinations with **increased confidence**
- ...comprehend how their grades will be calculated, and do the math to track their course grades
- ...**enjoy the cumulative benefits** of learning how to learn: relaxation, confidence, expertise, better grades, better job prospects, faster promotions, etc.
- ...**know** that no subject is beyond their ability to begin learning

Common pitfalls of “easy” thinking:

- Believing that high-school approaches to learning will produce high-quality performance
 - Reading only to read, attending only to attend, and studying only to study
 - Last-minute cramming, “reviewing” slides/notes, highlighting, rote memorization
- Studying to merely recognize
 - Works well only when told in detail what will be on the exam, and/or when exam questions come in expected form
- Underestimating the time and effort necessary to achieve understanding
 - “Time management” (vs. *moment* management) likely NOT sufficient
- Expecting great results from little effort or wasted effort