Critical thinking is a useful skill to develop to be successful in school. A critical thinker is someone who is good at using their mind to think deeply, logically, and objectively. Critical thinkers are considerate of the views of others.

**Characteristics of Critical Thinkers:**

- **Intellectual Independence:** Do your own thinking, and question your thoughts along with questioning what you hear and read from others.

- **Intellectual Perseverance:** Hang in there. If an idea or concept is difficult, seek understanding and don’t give up.

- **Intellectual Empathy:** Empathy means to vicariously experience the feelings and thoughts of another. It means to be sensitive—so although we should question others, we should do so with empathy rather than hostility or antagonism.

- **Intellectual Humility:** Admit when you don’t know something. This is related to intellectual integrity.

- **Intellectual Courage:** Be ready to speak up for what you think is right; be ready to support what you think is correct with valid argument and facts. (This is a hard one, because we see facts being skewed all around us, and we see prejudice and bias masquerading as truth.)

**To improve your thinking, ask yourself the following questions:**

1. What is the precise question I am trying to answer? What must I do to settle this question or develop a rationally defensible answer to it?

2. What information do I need? How can I get this information? Do I have the requisite facts and/or experience to support one answer rather than another?

3. Do I have to look at my subject from more than one point of view? Am I clear about the point of view within which I am reading?

4. What am I taking for granted or assuming? Am I justified in making these assumptions?

5. Am I addressing the question or issue at a superficial or deep level? It is necessary that I address it at a deeper level?