



# PROBLEM SOLVING &

# CRITICAL THINKING GUIDE

# Introduction

Employers expect job seekers and employees to use and demonstrate strong problem solving and critical thinking skills in the workplace. These skills help individuals assess situations, make informed decisions, and contribute to effective solutions.

Problem solving and critical thinking involve the ability to analyze information, identify issues, and develop practical solutions. In today's work environment, employers value individuals who can think independently and approach challenges with a clear and logical mindset.

Strong problem solvers take time to understand the situation before reacting. They gather information, consider different perspectives, and weigh possible outcomes. Critical thinking supports this process by helping individuals evaluate facts, recognize patterns, and avoid assumptions.

In the workplace, these skills show up in many ways. Employees may need to resolve conflicts, improve processes, or respond to unexpected challenges. Those who can stay focused and think through problems step by step are often seen as reliable and prepared for greater responsibility.



# Developing These Skills \_\_\_\_\_

## **01** Ask Questions

Get into the habit of asking “why,” “how,” and “what if.” This helps you understand situations more clearly instead of making quick assumptions.

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## **02** Break Problems Into Steps

When you face a challenge, slow down and break it into smaller parts. Focus on one step at a time so the problem feels more manageable.

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## **03** Look at Different Perspectives

Try to see situations from other points of view. This helps you think more clearly and make balanced decisions.

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## **04** Reflect on Your Experiences

After solving a problem, think about what worked and what did not. This helps you improve your approach in the future.

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**05**

## **Practice Decision Making**

Start making small decisions on your own. Weigh options, consider outcomes, and learn from the results.

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**06**

## **Seek Feedback**

Ask supervisors, professors, or peers for input. They can help you see things you may have missed and offer new ideas.

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**07**

## **Take on Challenges**

Do not avoid difficult tasks. Stepping outside your comfort zone helps you build confidence and strengthens your ability to think through problems.

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**08**

## **Stay Calm Under Pressure**

When problems arise, take a moment before reacting. Staying calm allows you to think clearly and respond in a more effective way.

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Over time, these habits will help you become more confident, thoughtful, and effective when solving problems in school, work, and everyday situations.

# Scenarios & Examples

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## Workplace Scenario



You notice that a project is falling behind schedule. Instead of placing blame, you review the timeline, identify delays, and speak with your team to understand the issue. You suggest adjusting deadlines and redistributing tasks to improve progress.

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## Workplace Scenario



A customer is upset about a delayed order. You listen carefully, gather the details, and offer a clear solution such as tracking the order or providing a replacement. You remain calm and focused on resolving the issue.

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## Team Scenario



Two team members disagree on how to complete a task. You help guide the conversation by asking questions, identifying the main concern, and working toward a solution that supports the team's goal.

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## Academic Example



You receive a lower grade than expected on an assignment. Instead of ignoring it, you review feedback, identify areas for improvement, and adjust your approach for future work.

# Scenarios & Examples

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## Process Improvement Example



You notice a task is taking longer than it should. You review the steps, identify inefficiencies, and suggest a simpler method that saves time and improves accuracy.

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Employers value individuals who face challenges and work through them with purpose. Strong problem solving and critical thinking skills show build trust and support long term success in any career.





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