

Critical Skills

Key Terms



Active Asking

Important negotiation and critical thinking skill. Asking questions that allow the opposite or other party to respond and frame an answer that provides necessary information to further the negotiation process.

Active Listening

Critical negotiation skill. First step in any dialogue is to pay attention, but active listening goes beyond this. Active listeners are engaged in the communication process. They provide feedback during the process and avoid biases.

Convergent Thinking

Convergent thinkers tend to see problems as obstacles. The problem is a target to be destroyed, managed or overcome. They are capable problem solvers in crisis situations. Effective, but often set their mind on one solution. Normally rational, and principle based.

Critical Thinking

A challenging concept to define, but an important characteristic to obtain. Simply put a critical thinker looks at all parts of a complex issue or problem with a fair, open minded, and unbiased perspective. The Joint Staff Officer Handbook has a brief description of the critical thinker and states the critical thinker has a "willingness to see ambiguities, multiple potential solutions to a problem, recognition that few answers are black and white, and an interest in exploring the possibilities."

Deductive Reasoning

A form of reasoning that arrives at conclusions based on arguments anchored in overarching principles. For example: if taking a human life is considered unacceptable, then the death penalty as a punishment in the criminal system must also be unacceptable.

Divergent Thinking

Divergent thinkers tend to see problems as opportunities. The problem is a starting point from which to imagine solutions. They are creative and spontaneous and are comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. Often dislike settling on one solution.

Framing	The way interests or desires are explained or stated. Specific words and word patterns are important in how items are framed verbally.
Inductive Reasoning	A form of reasoning that arrives at conclusions based on the observation and gathering of data, evidence or circumstances. For example: although taking a human life is generally considered unacceptable, when the evidence is compelling, such as the reprehensible and senseless rape and murder of an innocent girl is brought before the criminal justice system, then the death penalty can be justified as an acceptable punishment based on the viciousness of the crime.
Interrogative Questions	Questions using their messaging. Examples of low context cultures include the United States, Canada (English speaking), Australia, etc.
Multi-Party Negotiations	Negotiation between three or more parties. Offer A statement of terms which anticipates a counter-offer. It is more flexible than a demand.
Reframing	Communicating an idea is a new way or "frame" to broaden the view or perspective of your opposite. Much more than restating an idea, it is stating a concept or idea in a new way to expand the perspective of the discussion or interaction. A way to counter "thin slicing."
Stakeholder/Constituents	People outside the negotiation process who are impacted by the negotiation process.
Thin Slicing	A term used to describe decision making or development of evidence based on limited information or "thin slices" of reality. For example, thin slicing limits one's ability to see the entirety of a complex situation, to see all sides of an argument, or to fully consider the interests of all parties in a negotiation.