

Steps for Better Thinking Rubric

Steps for Better Thinking ↓ SKILLS ↓	←Less Complex Performance Patterns			More Complex Performance Patterns→	
	"Confused Fact Finder" Performance Pattern 0—How performance might appear when Step 1, 2, 3, and 4 skills are weak	"Biased Jumper" Performance Pattern 1—How performance might appear when Step 1 skills are adequate, but Step 2, 3, and 4 skills are weak	"Perpetual Analyzer" Performance Pattern 2—How performance might appear when Step 1 and 2 skills are adequate, but Step 3 and 4 skills are weak	"Pragmatic Performer" Performance Pattern 3—How performance might appear when Step 1, 2, and 3 skills are adequate, but Step 4 skills are weak	"Strategic Re-Visioner" Performance Pattern 4—How performance might appear when one has strong Step 1, 2, 3, and 4 skills
Step 1: IDENTIFY A—Identify and use relevant information B—Articulate uncertainties	A0—Uses very limited information; primarily "facts," definitions, or expert opinions B0—Either denies uncertainty OR attributes uncertainty to temporary lack of information or to own lack of knowledge	A1—Uses limited information, primarily evidence and information supporting own conclusion* B1—Identifies at least one reason for significant and enduring uncertainty*	A2—Uses a range of carefully evaluated, relevant information B2—Articulates complexities related to uncertainties and the relationships among different sources of uncertainty	A3—Uses a range of carefully evaluated, relevant information, including alternative criteria for judging among solutions B3—Exhibits complex awareness of relative importance of different sources of uncertainties	A4—Same as A3 PLUS includes viable strategies for GENERATING new information to address limitations B4—Exhibits complex awareness of ways to minimize uncertainties in coherent, on-going process of inquiry
Step 2: EXPLORE C—Integrate multiple perspectives and clarify assumptions D—Qualitatively interpret information and create a meaningful organization	C0—Portrays perspectives and information dichotomously, e.g., right/wrong, good/bad, smart/stupid D0—Does not acknowledge interpretation of information; uses contradictory or illogical arguments; lacks organization	C1—Acknowledges more than one potential solution, approach, or viewpoint; does not acknowledge own assumptions or biases D1—Interprets information superficially as either supporting or not supporting a point of view; ignores relevant information that disagrees with own position; fails to sufficiently break down the problem	C2—Interprets information from multiple viewpoints; identifies and evaluates assumptions; attempts to control own biases* D2—Objectively analyzes quality of information; Organizes information and concepts into viable framework for exploring realistic complexities of the problem*	C3—Evaluates information using general principles that allow comparisons across viewpoints; adequately justifies assumptions D3—Focuses analyses on the most important information based on reasonable assumptions about relative importance; organizes information using criteria that apply across different viewpoints and allow for qualitative comparisons	C4—Same as C3 PLUS argues convincingly using a complex, coherent discussion of own perspective, including strengths and limitations D4—Same as D3 PLUS systematically reinterprets evidence as new information is generated over time OR describes process that could be used to systematically reinterpret evidence
Step 3: PRIORITIZE E—Use guidelines or principles to judge objectively across the various options F—Implement and communicate conclusions for the setting and audience	E0—Fails to reason logically from evidence to conclusions; relies primary on unexamined prior beliefs, clichés, or an expert opinion F0—Creates illogical implementation plan; uses poor or inconsistent communication; does not appear to recognize existence of an audience	E1—Provides little evaluation of alternatives; offers partially reasoned conclusions; uses superficially understood evidence and information in support of beliefs F1—Fails to adequately address alternative viewpoints in implementation plans and communications; provides insufficient information or motivation for audience to adequately understand alternatives and complexity	E2—Uses evidence to reason logically within a given perspective, but unable to establish criteria that apply across alternatives to reach a well-founded conclusion OR unable to reach a conclusion in light of reasonable alternatives and/or uncertainties F2—Establishes overly complicated Implementation plans OR delays implementation process in search of additional information; provides audience with too much information (unable to adequately prioritize)	E3—Uses well-founded, overarching guidelines or principles to objectively compare and choose among alternative solutions; provides reasonable and substantive justification for assumptions and choices in light of other options* F3—Focuses on pragmatic issues in implementation plans; provides appropriate information and motivation, prioritized for the setting and audience*	E4—Articulates how a systematic process of critical inquiry was used to build solution; identifies how analysis and criteria can be refined, leading to better solutions or greater confidence over time F4—Implementation plans address current as well as long-term issues; provides appropriate information and motivation, prioritized for the setting and audience, to engage others over time
Step 4: ENVISION G—Acknowledge and monitor solution limitations through next steps H—Overall approach to the problem	G0—Does not acknowledge significant limitations beyond temporary uncertainty; next steps articulated as finding the "right" answer (often by experts) H0—Proceeds as if goal is to find the single, "correct" answer	G1—Acknowledges at least one limitation or reason for significant and enduring uncertainty; if prompted, next steps generally address gathering more information H1—Proceeds as if goal is to stack up evidence and information to support own conclusion	G2—Articulates connections among underlying contributors to limitations; articulates next steps as gathering more information and looking at problem more complexly and/or thoroughly H2—Proceeds as if goal is to establish an unbiased, balanced view of evidence and information from different points of view	G3—Adequately describes relative importance of solution limitations when compared to other viable options; next steps pragmatic with focus on efficiently GATHERING more information to address significant limitations over time H3—Proceeds as if goal is to come to a well-founded conclusion based on objective consideration of priorities across viable alternatives	G4—Identifies limitations as in G3; as next steps, suggests viable processes for strategically GENERATING new information to aid in addressing significant limitations over time* H4—Proceeds as if goal is to strategically construct knowledge, to move toward better conclusions or greater confidence in conclusions as the problem is addressed over time*

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* Shaded cells most closely related to "stair step" model. Performance descriptions to the left of a shaded cell characterize skill weaknesses. Performance descriptions to the right of a shaded cell characterize skill strengths.