

TEACH CHILDREN TO THINK CRITICALLY



The information in this guide can be used informally by parents to encourage their children to think. Discuss books, stories, and articles read by the children or read to them. Also discuss movies, TV programs and commercials. By example, they will learn to look beyond the surface.

Teachers, tutors, and parents should become familiar with the terms in this guide in order to introduce them informally through discussion or activities that provide a meaningful context. Practice can, and should be, applied to content in any subject. The students' focus should be on gaining understanding of anything read or heard, not on memorizing definitions. The students will then recognize that the concept or skill has practical, not merely academic, value.

€ Allow students to investigate topics of personal interest. Help them become efficient in using reference skills to find information, and direct them in evaluating whether each resource is usable for their situation (*page 64*):

- ➔ Who is the author and does he have any expertise in the field?
- ➔ What is the copyright or date of revision?
- ➔ Can this information be considered relevant, or should it be discarded as out of date?

Developing this as a habit will help them in their selection of books for personal use.

€ Encourage students to use references in response to need: a telephone directory to find someone's phone number or address, a dictionary or thesaurus to choose the best word in a composition, maps to find their way around a shopping mall, and so on.

€ Students often find analysis difficult, preferring to read for answers to complete worksheets. Allow students to express opinions and attempt to

prove their points even if it disagrees with an author or teacher. Any student that has a valid point will be encouraged to continue analyzing and contributing to discussions. If a student's point is weak, the teacher can provide necessary feedback to direct his thinking and serve as a model to help him develop both the skill and habit of evaluation.

- ➔ After watching a movie, discuss its merits based on the elements of literature, encouraging the students to do the same.

 - ➔ Instead of having students simply identify examples of exaggeration, have them discuss whether it is being used for effect (hyperbole, irony), or if it is an unethical stretch of the truth used in an attempt to persuade the reader to a particular point of view. This should become a habit applied to even casual personal reading—magazines, newspapers, advertisements.
- £ Identify propaganda techniques used in television commercials and encourage the students to do the same.
- £ Examine newspaper articles for bias, identifying examples of opinions given in accounts that should be entirely objective. Older students can then be given articles to read and examine, and an opportunity to offer their opinion.
- ⊕ Any areas of comprehension that appear difficult for a child can be targeted for extra practice using workbooks or software at the appropriate skill level. The child should practice until it makes sense—until he's mastered that skill at that level. Mastery, not completion of materials, should be the goal.

The checklist in the back of this guide may be used to keep a record of practice, providing an easy reference for teacher planning. A few areas may be targeted for a short period of time, rather than attempting to cover all skills continuously.