



Thinking Skills for Risk Management

This job aid provides a comprehensive reference for enhancing critical, strategic, and systems thinking skills in risk management. It includes questions and guidelines to help individuals address problems, understand underlying causes, and make informed decisions while considering potential risks and opportunities.

Thinking Skills		
Critical Thinking Questions	Strategic Thinking Questions	Systems Thinking Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the problem or issue being addressed? People do not always ask before trying to solve things — be sure you do. Ask, “Why are we here? Why are we doing what we are doing? Is there a safer way to do it?” What conditions are influencing those involved? How are human factors (e.g., fatigue, human limitations) impacting decision making? What are the key assumptions being made? Repeat or rephrase to ensure you accurately grasp the leader’s intent. Are there any alternative perspectives? What are the potential implications or consequences of the approach? How does the approach relate to existing knowledge or beliefs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the long-term goals and objectives for this situation? What are the potential risks and opportunities? How can we use our resources more efficiently to achieve our goals? What external factors (e.g., weather, terrain, stress, politics) should we be aware of and prepare for? How will we measure success? How can we adapt our strategies to stay ahead of risks? What are the potential barriers to success, and how can we address them proactively? How can we leverage our strengths and address our weaknesses to achieve our objectives? Is exposure worth the benefit based on the values in play? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the interconnected elements of the situation? How do the different components of the situation interact with each other? What are the patterns of change or behavior within the situation? What are the potential feedback loops within the situation? How do external factors, such as politics, influence the situation, if at all? What structural or interpersonal conditions are contributing to the situation? How can we identify leverage points within the situation to create change? What needs to be done, and who can do it?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any logical fallacies or inconsistencies in the approach? Be aware of biases. • What additional information or data would be helpful to consider? • What are the potential positive outcomes? • How likely are the positive outcomes to occur? • What are the potential negative outcomes? • How likely are the negative outcomes to occur? • How severe are the negative outcomes likely to be? • How robust are the opportunities to change the frequency and/or severity of negative outcomes? • Are there unintended outcomes of the mitigations? • Does the remaining risk make sense compared to what is being protected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How fast does the decision need to be made? (time decision wedge) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the potential unintended consequences of intervening in the situation? • How can we develop a holistic understanding of the situation, considering multiple perspectives and stakeholders? • How can we communicate the complexities and interconnectedness of the situation effectively?
The Ultimate Questions:		Is this activity worth the risk we are taking? Is there a safer option?

Self-Insight and Interpersonal Awareness

Become more self-aware.

- Identify your emotional triggers.
- Tune in to your body and tone of voice.
- Practice self-reflection.
- Ask for, and be open to, feedback.
- Practice active listening.
- Keep a journal.

Improve self-regulation.

- Become aware of your emotions. Monitor your body to get clues about how you are feeling. Identify your emotions but recognize they do not have to rule your behavior.
- Recognize there are options for how to respond in any given situation. Try to make a conscious choice instead of being swept away in the moment.
- Strive to stay calm and think clearly under pressure.
- Set yourself up for success — get sufficient sleep and exercise and eat a healthy diet. Stress makes self-regulation harder.
- Give yourself grace. Know that you will not always respond to situations perfectly.

Credibility and Trust

Build credibility and trust.

- Get out of the truck.
 - Walk and drive your assigned area to view values at risk, particularly areas that pose the highest risk to personnel.
- Be present, talk with everyone, and build rapport, but look and listen before you talk.
 - Use critical thinking; do not make assumptions.
 - Be aware of your own biases.
 - Use your interpersonal awareness. Pay attention and meet people where they are.

Use influence and persuasion.

- Use critical thinking skills and questioning to determine when, and how, to step into a situation.
- Use interpersonal awareness skills to read your audience and adjust your approach as needed. Different people and different situations will call for different measures.
- Leverage trust and credibility.
 - Listen more than you talk. Understand your audience's needs, concerns, and motivations by actively listening to them, which will help you tailor your persuasive message more effectively.
 - Find common ground. Identify shared values, goals, or interests to create a connection with your audience.

- Listen actively and communicate effectively.



- Adapt your communication style to suit the needs and preferences of your audience.
 - Be prepared to speak up in division breakouts.
 - Avoid using jargon, being ambiguous, or making assumptions.
 - Clearly communicate the task, purpose, and end state.
 - **Note:** You can be technically correct yet lose trust if you do not communicate well.
 - Demonstrate honesty, reliability, and integrity.
 - Tell the truth, follow through, and do what is right.
 - Ensure your actions, words, and expectations are consistent and transparent.
 - Lead by example.
 - Share your knowledge, skills, and abilities in action.
 - Demonstrate your expertise through your work and actions, rather than just talking about it.
 - Build relationships and networks.
 - Establish connections with colleagues, clients, and partners to show your commitment and understanding of their needs.
 - Be a sounding board.
 - Develop expertise.
 - Stay up to date with changes in your field and continuously improve your knowledge and skills.
- Establish credibility. Demonstrate your knowledge, expertise, and trustworthiness to make others believe in your ideas and opinions.
 - Connect emotionally. Show your passion and commitment to the issue, and appeal to the emotions of your audience to create a deeper connection.
 - Provide evidence. Offer strong, relevant, and reliable evidence to support your argument and make it more convincing.
 - Show confidence. Display confident body language and tone to make it easier to persuade your audience.
 - Break it down into smaller steps. If the action you want to persuade others to take is complex or time-consuming, break it down into smaller, more manageable steps to make it less intimidating.
 - Appeal to authority or peer pressure. Use social proof to show that others are taking action or supporting your idea, making it more appealing for your audience to follow suit.
- Show gratitude. Thank others for compromising on, and assisting with, solutions.