Checklist for Critical Thought

(Checklist excerpted from "The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools" by Dr. Richard Paul and Dr. Linda Elder. 2008 special edition.)

1. **All reasoning has a purpose.**

   - State your purpose clearly.
   - Distinguish your purpose from related purposes.
   - Check periodically to be sure you are still on target.
   - Choose significant and realistic purposes.

2. **All reasoning is an attempt to figure something out, to settle some question, to solve some problem.**

   - State the question clearly and precisely.
   - Express the question in several ways to clarify its meaning and scope.
   - Break the question into sub-questions.
   - Distinguish questions that have definitive answers from those that are a matter of opinion and from those that require consideration of multiple viewpoints.

3. **All reasoning is based on assumption.**

   - Clearly identify your assumptions and determine whether they are justifiable.
   - Consider how your assumptions are shaping your point of view.

4. **All reasoning is done from some point of view.**

   - Identify your point of view.
   - Seek other points of view and identify their strengths and weaknesses.
   - Strive to be fair-minded in evaluating all points of view.

5. **All reasoning is based on data, information, and evidence.**

   - Restrict your claims to those supported by the data you have.
   - Search for information that opposes your position as well as information that supports it.
   - Make sure that all information is clear, accurate, and relevant to the question at issue.
   - Make sure you have gathered sufficient information.

6. **All reasoning is expressed through, and shaped by, concepts and ideas.**

   - Identify key concepts and explain them clearly.
   - Consider alternative concepts or alternative definitions of concepts.
   - Make sure you are using concepts with care and precision.

7. **All reasoning contains inferences or interpretations by which we draw conclusions and give meaning to data.**

   - Infer only what the evidence implies.
   - Check inferences for their consistency with each other.
   - Identify assumptions that lead to inferences.

8. **All reasoning leads somewhere or has implications and consequences.**

   - Trace the implications and consequences that follow from your reasoning.
   - Search for negative and positive implications.
   - Consider all possible consequences.