



ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO IMPROVE CRITICAL THINKING



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Last year, I was privileged to attend Dr Nadya Patel's two-part Critical Thinking workshop with colleagues from the Prep2PSLE and the English Language and Literacy Division (ELL) Curriculum Team.

In this article, I will be sharing one of the many things I have learned from the workshop on asking students the right questions to improve their critical thinking with the *G1 English Oral examination in mind. (*Note: G1 was previously known as the Normal Technical stream)

Firstly, the G1 English Oral examination, also known as Paper 4 of the English Language Exam has two parts: Reading Aloud and Spoken Interaction (Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board, SEAB, 2023). In the Spoken Interaction section, students are shown a short video and will be asked by the Examiners questions based on it (SEAB, 2023).

So, parents, what can we do at home to help our teenagers with their oral exam?

Whenever you or your teenager comes across an interesting video, especially during common meal times, you could take the opportunity to discuss the video and at the same time promote your child's critical thinking.

Some examples of possible video topics include Racial Harmony, National Day, Olympics and Recycling.



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Although we may not know what examiners may ask, the questions we ask our teenagers could improve their critical thinking while preparing them for their oral exams.

Paul and Elder's (2019) Critical Thinking Framework includes 8 elements of thoughts: Purpose, Question, Points of view, Information, Inferences, Concepts, Implications and Assumptions.

The following example shows how we could apply 4 of the elements of thoughts to improve critical thinking.

Example: Video of the famous Shibuya crossing

The Elements of Thought	Examples of question
Question	Give me a question that comes to your mind when you watched the video.
Inferences	Where is this place and what clues are there which tells you so?
Purpose	What is the purpose of having more than one crosswalk?
Implications and consequences	What would the consequences be if there is no crosswalk at this place?

Regardless of the medium we use, be it a video or even just an image, we could ask our children questions to improve their critical thinking by bearing in mind the elements of thoughts.

To learn more about the workshop my colleagues and I attended, [click on this article](#). Refer to the references below to learn more about critical thinking.

References

- Patel, N. S. (2023). Integrating Critical Thinking in Instruction. Workshop notes.
Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2019). The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools (8th ed.) Rowman & Littlefield Publishers