LES ACADEMY

For Educational Service

DEVELOP YOUR CRITICAL THINKING

COURSE SYLLABUS

Overview of the Course

Learn About Critical Thinking

As you start this course, you are bound to ask yourself: what does critical thinking mean in practical terms? Before we answer that, we want to share a couple of examples with you.

Situation 1: The Explosion of the Challenger Space Shuttle

In January 1986, the Challenger shuttle exploded 73 seconds after take-off, killing the crew. The cause? It wasn't just technical; it was also **human error!** In a nutshell, the company that supplied the tanks' seals was against the launch because it was cold that day, but they were ignored. An incident that would have been trivial in a "normal" situation was not reported when those tanks were filled. An entire series of micro-events resulted in the explosion of the shuttle.

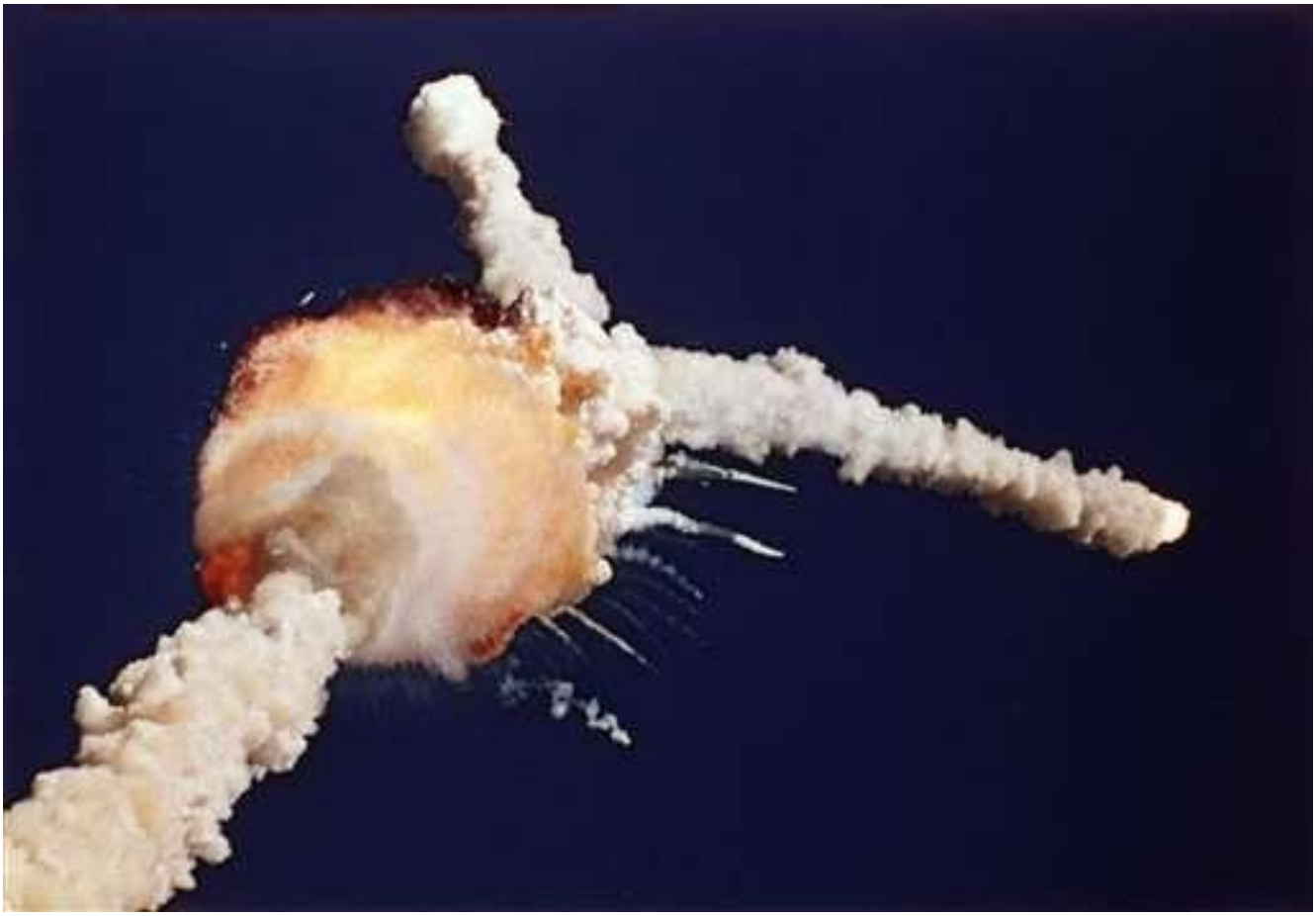

Photo – explosion of the Challenger shuttle – 1986

Situation 2: Negotiating a Price

You want to buy a piece of furniture, but the one you have your eye on is out of your price range. You eventually negotiate the price down to a reasonable amount and leave the store pleased with the deal. Would you have felt that you got a good deal if you had paid full price? Perhaps you were blinded by the excessive starting figure.

What is the common factor in these two situations?

In both cases, your brain, the tool that you use to reflect, prevents you from taking a step back to question and analyze the situation. On the one hand, the shuttle explosion was the result of **poor human decisions.** On the other hand, the furniture purchase was subject to a **cognitive bias,** a shortcut used by your brain to decide and act quickly with minimal effort. Both cases would have required more **critical thinking.**

Critical thinking is crucial in daily life (i.e., to interpret online information or understand the media) and at work (to question professional situations, to interpret data and make effective decisions).

According to the World Economic Forum's 2020 Future of Jobs report, critical thinking is once again in the top ten skills needed by 2025.

Follow Our Four-Step Journey

Does critical thinking seem like a vast, complicated topic? Don't worry! In this course, you will learn a four-step journey that will help you develop the tools you need to think critically.

1. **Cognitive biases,** which are automatic mechanisms that can sometimes hinder critical thinking.
2. **The scientific method,** which is fundamental to critical thinking.
3. **The reliability of information sources,** which must be checked before reaching any conclusion.
4. **Bad arguments,** which you must know how to avoid.

These steps are like milestones in your progress towards critical thinking. We will explore them all in the coming chapters.

This course has **three sections.** In the first section, you will learn to identify cognitive biases. In the second, you will use critical thinking to question situations. In the third section, you will learn to build a valid argument based on facts.

*Let's start with **cognitive biases.** Most of the time, the human brain works **automatically,** which frequently prevents you from using critical thinking. The first step involves identifying these automatic mechanisms, which is what we'll be doing in the next chapter, so let's go!*

Learning Outcomes

- Identify and address cognitive biases
- Carry out a credible search for information
- Avoid the pitfalls of bad arguments

Requirements

None

Copyright © 2023 by Educational Testing Service. All rights reserved. LES Academy, the LESA logo, Speak in Public and iBT are registered trademarks of Educational Testing Service (ETS) Worldwide.

Links/

LES Academy Instagram

Learn English Steps Instagram