

Encouraging Critical Thinking in Preteens



Five Tips for Better Reasoning in Children Aged 10 to 12

The ability to think critically and independently is at a premium in today's world. Below are five tips for developing critical thinking for children in their preteen years.



1. Fun With Logic

As they near their early teenage years, kids become able to reason logically at a more abstract level. But children need practice and challenges in order to hone these reasoning skills. Adults can introduce them to logical concepts and exercises, and play games that involve logical deduction — like Clue, logic puzzles, or brainteasers.

Preteens also become more capable of expressing their views and arguing about complicated problems. Adults should make an effort to include them in conversations at home about current events, culture, and ideas.



2. Managing Screen Time

The internet presents kids with a wealth of useful information and educational tools. But these positives can easily get buried under a sea of distractions and bad information. It's vital that kids develop healthy screen habits, learn how to identify and avoid toxic influences, and make time spent online worthwhile.

Parents should be proactive. Guide your kids through web searches and talk to them about how advertising and other influences manipulate emotions and attention. Be explicit about the negative consequences excessive time browsing the internet or playing video games can have on their development. And help them work on building discipline and structure into their relationship with technology.

Know Your Preteen.

Around the ages of 10 to 12, children begin to undergo a number of changes. Developing bodies, growing social lives (both on- and offline), and shifting relationships with parents can all present challenges.



At the same time, preteens become more and more capable of deep and independent thought. Ideally, these new critical thinking skills can help kids negotiate these new changes more calmly and productively.



3. Coping With Adolescence

Puberty introduces a whole new range of emotions, anxieties, and distractions into the lives of preteens and teenagers. These changes are, of course, positive. But if they become overwhelming they can distract from cognitive development, school work, and children's interests.

Good critical thinking skills can help kids put these changes in perspective, better manage impulses, and bring balance to their lives. Parents can support their children by having open and frank discussions, encouraging them to set goals, and pointing out when distractions are preventing them from meeting those goals. They should always be sure to emphasize that the changes their children are going through are universal and positive.



4. Overcoming Cognitive Biases

Bias is an unavoidable part of thinking. We get stuck in a particular way of seeing things, and fail to step back and think more clearly. One of the most common cognitive biases is confirmation bias, which leads us to view new information in a skewed way so it fits in with previously held beliefs.

As they begin to reason in more and more advanced ways, kids will begin to encounter bias in others and in themselves. In order to overcome bias that leads to poor judgments and decisions, kids first have to know about it. Parents can introduce the concept of cognitive bias and work through examples. This metacognitive process will help kids think more carefully, make better decisions, and deal better with disagreements.



5. Navigating a New Social Life

As they make their way out of elementary school and gain new independence and responsibility, kids enter new friend groups and begin to detach more and more from their parents. This is obviously an important step, but it can be difficult for kids to deal with the new pressures that arise. Children are more susceptible to peer pressure and groupthink than adults.

This can be a difficult time for parents as well, as kids begin to detach and the terms of the parent-child relationship change. But if parents are empathetic and helpful, kids will come to see them as a resource for negotiating new situations, rather than an authority to be feared or rejected.

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Read the Full Critical Thinking Guide Online at [Reboot-Foundation.org](https://reboot-foundation.org).

Together with some of the world's leading researchers, the team at Reboot pulled together a comprehensive guide to supporting the development of critical thinking in children. Read more online.