

How can you develop strong skills at thinking logically?

When you think logically, you make reasonable connections between ideas. The following four steps in logical thinking are demonstrated in this lesson.

Step 1: Identify claims made in a text.

Step 2: Identify evidence used to support each claim.

Step 3: Assess whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support each claim.

Step 4: Assess whether the conclusion of the text follows logically from the claims.

Step 1: Identify claims made in a text.

When you read a text closely, you will notice that the writer is making claims about people, actions, and nature. For example, the claim in the following passage is highlighted in yellow:

Stonehenge is an ancient stone structure in southwest England. **It was built bit by bit between 3100 B.C. and 1500 B.C.** Archeologists know this because they can accurately date the soil and objects around the monument.

Step 2: Identify evidence used to support each claim.

Evidence can come in many forms. Factual statements can be supported by statistics or the reasoned judgments of experts. Literary interpretations can be supported by specific passages in a text. In the following example, the evidence is highlighted in yellow.

Stonehenge is an ancient stone structure in southwest England. It was built bit by bit between 3100 B.C. and 1500 B.C. Archeologists know this because they can accurately date the soil and objects around the monument.

Step 3: Assess whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support each claim.

In the following excerpt, the first sentence states the claim. The evidence is highlighted in yellow. Consider whether this evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claim.

Stonehenge was an ancient hospital. Evidence for this is that the area around **Stonehenge includes a large number of burials**. Sick people went to Stonehenge hoping to be cured. When they were not, they died and were buried nearby. From this, we can conclude that many of the other ancient stone structures were also hospitals.

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The evidence is relevant. It helps support the claim.

The evidence is not sufficient. Many reasons might explain why a large number of burials have been found near Stonehenge. Maybe it was an area with many wars. Maybe it was a religious site that attracted people who knew they were about to die. Maybe archeologists have found more burial sites because they have studied the area more.

Step 4: Assess whether the conclusion of the text follows logically from the claims.

The conclusion is in yellow below. It does not follow logically from the claim. Even if the claim is true, it describes only Stonehenge. Other ancient stone structures might have had different purposes.

Stonehenge was an ancient hospital. Evidence for this is that the area around **Stonehenge includes a large number of burials**. Sick people went to Stonehenge hoping to be cured. When they were not, they died and were buried nearby. From this, we can conclude that many of the other ancient stone structures were also hospitals.