Thinking: All

Use these practical tips to help you improve your **thinking** skills:

Problem Solving | Before you try to solve a problem:

- Get all the information you can by asking questions such as who, what, when, where, why and how. This may involve doing research, referring to publications (e.g. policies, procedures, reports), and speaking to colleagues and others who may have the information that you need.
- Remember to make notes as you gather information so that you can refer to them later.
- Reflect on how you solved similar problems in the past – you may be able to use these experiences to help you solve current problems.
- Ask your peers or co-workers for help – they may have dealt with a similar problem and can provide you with helpful advice.
- Try doing things in new ways. Brainstorm with a group of people to help identify different ideas and approaches to solving problems.
- When a problem affects others, consider their points of view before choosing a solution.
- When a problem is complicated, break it down into smaller parts and deal with one part at a time.
- Evaluate the pros and cons of using a particular solution.

Decision Making | Before making a decision:

- Keep an open mind and consider all the options available. Ask questions like "which option will best meet my objectives?" and "what are the potential impacts of a particular option?"
- Consider all the information that is available and write it down. Use tools like a Venn diagram to organize the information and help you visualize the best choice.
- Ask others for their advice. They may have made similar decisions in the past and can share their experiences.
- If your decision is going to affect others, it is important to find out about their concerns and needs. Keep them informed throughout the decision making process so that they understand why and how the decision was made.
- Reflect on your own past experiences (e.g. think about what helped you make a decision in the past and how that might help you make the best decision this time).

Job Task Planning and Organizing | Use these tips to help you effectively manage your time and organize your tasks:

- Make a to-do list of all the things you need to get done and organize them by their level of importance. To help you figure out what is most important – think about what the impact would be if you did not complete the task on time, or did not complete it at all.
- Limit each task to a single action. For example, if you write down "develop budget for personal expenses" on your to-do list, you can break that task down into smaller actions such as reviewing your income, identifying daily, weekly and monthly expenses, and calculating utility costs.
- Coordinate your tasks with those of your co-workers where necessary (e.g. make a schedule for using a shared piece of equipment).
- Plan for each day. To-do lists may need to be revised daily, weekly or monthly to accommodate unexpected delays or new priorities.
- In addition to to-do lists, use tools such as agendas or calendars to more effectively organize your tasks and your time.