

Two Basic Thinking Tactics

FOUR GUIDELINES FOR THINKING ON PAPER

“Thinking on paper” means writing out your thoughts, in full sentences, as you think. Do it to help you do your best thinking and record your train of thought.

1. Start by writing down your **thinking goal**. Your immediate purpose is to figure out _____?
2. Record your thoughts **in full sentences**, following the main line of thinking. Slow down the thinking to match the pace of the writing.
3. Whenever you hesitate, write down a **helpful question** to get your thoughts moving on a path toward the goal. Then answer the question.
4. **Monitor** your progress and priorities to **redirect** as needed. When you’re finished, write down your conclusion and your one-sentence reason for it.

If you have a problem, stop to identify the exact problem. Then switch to thinking about a solution that would redirect you to a path toward the main goal.

THREE GUIDELINES FOR “COMPLAINING”

“Complaining” is a thinking tactic for understanding and overcoming your own resistance.

1. Start by completing sentence stems that draw out the source of resistance:
 - This task is impossible because...
 - If I pursue this goal, the following terrible things will happen...
 - I don’t want to do this task because...
 - I would rather not do this task because...
2. After you complain, challenge these “first thoughts.” Look at what you wrote with a “fishy eye.”
 - Is that literally true?
 - Does that really follow?
 - Who cares?
3. Do a mental cleanup to sum up what you’ve learned.
 - Takeaways
 - Open Questions
 - Next Steps