Critical Thinking involves progressing beyond the mere analysis and evaluation of ideas to the development of perspectives that improve those ideas. At the heart of critical thinking is the ability to question information. Below is a list of questions designed to facilitate critical thinking and encourage speakers and audience members to learn how to apply critical thinking in any situation. Use these questions to guide your speech writing process and to be a more critical listener.

What is the purpose of the message?
- What is the speaker trying to achieve?
- Is the purpose clear?
- Is the purpose justifiable?
- Is the purpose ethical?

What question(s) is the speaker trying to answer?
- Are there other ways to think about the question?
- Is there one right answer to the question?
- Can there be more than one reasonable answer?

What assumptions has the speaker made?
- Are the assumptions justified?
- Which assumptions might be questioned?
- How might those assumptions lead to flawed reasoning?

What is the speaker’s point of view?
- What are the strengths of these viewpoints?
- What are the weaknesses of the viewpoints?
- How might the speaker’s point of view differ from that of audience members?

What type of information supports the argument?
- Has the speaker gathered sufficient data to reach a reasonable conclusion?
- What are the facts and opinions surrounding the question or argument?
- How clear, accurate, and relevant is the information that supports the question or argument?

What concepts and theories support the conclusion?
- What key concepts and theories guide the research?
- Is the use of concepts and theories clear and precise?
- Do concepts and theories support alternate explanations?
- Are any ideas distorted to push an agenda or show bias?
What conclusions and solutions are obvious based on available information?
- How did the speaker reach his/her conclusion?
- To what extent does data support the conclusion?
- What conclusions are logical?
- What conclusions are flawed and why?

What are the implications and consequences of the line of reasoning?
- How might the implications and consequences affect others?
- How might the audience respond to these implications and consequences?
- Does the speaker show a sensitivity to the implications and consequences?

It would not be possible to address all of these questions, nor are all of them relevant to your topic or speech criteria. Use these questions as a starting point to writing your speech or listening to others speak.