



Clear Thinking Exercises

Purpose

These exercises are designed to improve your clear-thinking skills, enhance your decision-making, enrich your communication strategies, and encourage meaningful self-reflection. If you use the approach outlined below, it will significantly increase the probability you'll become a clearer thinker.

Approach

The process below will help you get the most out of these exercises:

1. Contemplate the question
2. Write a one paragraph response to the question
3. Find or create an illustration, graphic, or image that supports your reasoning
4. Ponder how to use the idea you developed in your daily life
5. Discuss your idea with others

Contemplate the question

Write a one paragraph response

Find or create an illustration, graphic, or image of support

Ponder how to use the idea in your daily life

Discuss your idea with others

Unit 1 – Foundations of PMQ Thinking

Chapters 1 - 8 Exercises

Objectives

- Create awareness of the value of clear thinking
- Promote the understanding of the fundamental clear-thinking components (Plus, Minus, Questions)
- Lay the foundation for crafting useful PMQ charts (Plus, Minus, Questions)

Exercise Questions

1. Find an example of nonsense or hype based on Tables 1.1 and 1.2. Discuss why this example meets the criteria in the table. Describe the likely impact of the nonsense or hype. What's the best possible response in this situation? Why?
2. Describe a situation where you've asked the wrong question. What happened? What would have been a better question? Why?
3. Describe an important situation where a plus or minus emerged that you didn't anticipate. In the future, how could you do a better job anticipating emergent or evolving issues?

Unit 2 -Developing Hacks

Chapters 9 - 14 Exercises

Objectives

- Show how to craft a solid, first draft of a PMQ chart
- Demonstrate how to enhance the quality of an initial PMQ chart
- Illustrate how to add more options to PMQ charts

Exercise Questions

1. Develop a PMQ list for an important belief or perspective that you hold. Flip at least one entry from one column to another. Describe why you chose that particular item to flip. What did this exercise teach you about clear thinking?
2. Develop a PMQ for a pending decision. Using the techniques described in these chapters, seek out a second opinion. How did the second opinion alter your PMQ thinking? What did this exercise teach you about clear thinking?
3. Most initial PMQ charts need to be further developed and tweaked. What are the 5 most important tweaks you need to make to your typical PMQ chart? Why?

Unit 3 – Deciding Hacks

Chapters 15 - 17 Exercises

Objectives

- Show how to scrutinize hidden features of PMQ charts
- Create awareness of alternative decision-making methods
- Demonstrate how to use decision-making methods

Topics

1. Develop a PMQ list for an important pending decision. Identify hidden synergies in your chart. How do the synergies influence your decision-making process? What did this exercise teach you about clear thinking?
2. The book describes four methods for making decisions or adopting a perspective: (a) Ben Franklin's method, b) weighting formula, c) intuition, or d) dialogue. In general, which one are you most comfortable using? Least comfortable? Why?
3. Develop a 5-step plan for using PMQ thinking as a tool for group decision-making. Discuss your rationale. What principles did you incorporate into your plan?

Unit 4 – Communicating Hacks

Chapters 18 - 21 Exercises

Objectives

- Lay the foundation for effectively communicating about a decision or perspective
- Present major communicative options after deciding or adopting a perspective
- Demonstrate how to pack and unpack core messages that emerge from a decision or perspective

Exercises

1. Using principles from this unit, develop an audience analysis chart regarding a forthcoming decision (See Table 18.1). Cross out one of the audiences on your chart. How would this omission influence the acceptance of your decision? Why?
2. Think of several people with whom you are not comfortable sharing your opinion or perspective on certain topics. Write down their initials. Is there a pattern or set of behaviors that these people share? If so, what are they? Should you continue your current practices of avoiding those conversations?
3. Develop three options for packaging an impending decision or important viewpoint (See Hack 12). Discuss the upside/downside of each option. Which option makes the most sense? Why?

Unit 5 – Reflecting Hacks

Chapters 22 - 24 Exercises

Objectives

- Encourage self-reflection about the use of PMQ thinking in your daily life
- Foster the use of robust clear thinking in your daily life
- Summarize key action points for the future

Exercises

1. Describe 3 common clear-thinking mistakes you make. Why do you typically encounter these challenges?
2. Consider the people you normally associate with in your personal and professional life.
 - What percentage of them do you believe are clear thinkers? Muddled thinkers?
 - What are the common characteristics of the clear-thinking people? Muddled thinkers?
 - What kinds of behaviors do clear thinkers exhibit? Muddled thinkers?
3. What are the 5 most important things you can do become a clearer thinker in the future? Why are these so important to you?