THE THOUGHT DETECTIVE CARD

CRITICAL THINKING FOR KIDS
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New to this? Start here. Critical thinking means checking before you believe or decide. Keep this card where you read, watch videos or do homework. When something surprises you, scares you or sells to you, run the Second Look first, then use the tool below that fits.

1 · THE SECOND LOOK

- What exactly is being said?
- How could I check it?
- If I were wrong, what would I notice?

2 · FACT OR OPINION

- Can it be checked? Then it is a factual claim.
- When I check it, is it true? Then it is a fact.
- Clue words for opinions: best, worst, should, beautiful, boring, amazing.

3 · ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

- Why? How? What if? Who says? When? Where?
- Follow-ups: Can you give an example? How do you know?
- Build a chain until you reach a reliable source.

4 · THE SEVEN SNEAKY TRICKS

TRICK	REAL NAME	DETECTIVE'S RESPONSE
Everyone's Doing It	Bandwagon	Popular is not proof.
Just Because	Circular reasoning	That reason just repeats the claim.
All-or-Nothing	False dilemma	Are those really the only choices?
Jump to Conclusions	Hasty generalization	One example is not a pattern.
Attack the Person	Ad hominem	Judge the idea, not the person.
Red Herring	Changing the subject	Let's get back to the question.
After This, So Because of This	False cause	Happening first is not causing.

5 · CHECK THE SOURCE

- Expertise: do they know this topic?
- Evidence: do they show how they know?
- Purpose: are they selling or pushing a side?
- Track record: are they usually right? Do they correct mistakes?
- Read laterally: leave the page and see what others say about it.

6 · SMART CHOICES

- **S**top and think
- **M**ap out your options
- **A**nalyze pros and cons
- **R**esearch when needed
- **T**est it against your values

7 · SOLVE PROBLEMS

- **S**ee the real problem
- **O**pen your mind
- **L**ook from different angles
- **V**isualize and test
- **E**xecute and evaluate

THE THOUGHT DETECTIVE'S MOTTO

"I will question with courage, research with care, and decide with wisdom. I will stay curious, admit when I am wrong, and never stop learning."

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