**Clarify Your Thinking**

From: Becoming a Critic of Your Thinking by Dr. Linda Elder and Dr. Richard Paul  
http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/becoming-a-critic-of-your-thinking/478

“Our own thinking usually seems clear to us, even when it is not. But vague, ambiguous, muddled, deceptive, or misleading thinking are significant problems in human life.”

*Strategies for Clarifying Your Thinking*

- State one point at a time.
- Elaborate on what you mean.
- Give examples that connect your thoughts to life experiences.
- Use analogies and metaphors to help people connect your ideas to a variety of things they already understand (for example, critical thinking is like an onion. There are many layers to it. Just when you think you have it basically figured out, you realize there is another layer, and then another, and another and another and on and on).

[COMMENT from Dr. Krista Patriquin, Dalhousie University Writing Centre: While connecting to life experiences and using analogies or metaphors may clarify your thinking, you typically would not include them in your writing (unless writing a personal reflective piece, for example).]

*Here is One Format You Can Use*

- I think . . . (state your main point)
- In other words . . . (elaborate your main point)
- For example . . . (give an example of your main point)
- To give you an analogy . . . (give an illustration of your main point)

*To Clarify Other People’s Thinking, Consider Asking the Following*

- Can you restate your point in other words? I didn’t understand you.
- Can you give an example?
- Let me tell you what I understand you to be saying. Did I understand you correctly?