

Pre-Reflective Thinking (Stages 1, 2, and 3)

Stage 1 <i>I know what I have seen.</i>	View of Knowledge	Knowledge is assumed to exist absolutely and concretely; it is not understood as an abstraction. It can be obtained with certainty by direct observation.
	Concept of Justification	Beliefs need no justification since there is assumed to be an absolute correspondence between what is believed to be true and what is true. Alternate beliefs are not perceived.
Stage 2 <i>If it is on the news, it has to be true.</i>	View of Knowledge	Knowledge is assumed to be absolutely certain or certain but not immediately available. Knowledge can be obtained directly through the senses (as in direct observation) or via authority figures.
	Concept of Justification	Beliefs are unexamined and unjustified or justified by their correspondence with the beliefs of an authority figure (such as a teacher or parent). Most issues are assumed to have a right answer, so there is little or no conflict in making decisions about disputed issues.
Stage 3 <i>If everyone can be convinced, then it is knowledge; if not, it's just a guess.</i>	View of Knowledge	Knowledge is assumed to be absolutely certain or temporarily uncertain. In areas of temporary uncertainty, only personal beliefs can be known until absolute knowledge is obtained. In areas of absolute certainty, knowledge is obtained from authorities.
	Concept of Justification	In areas in which certain answers exist, beliefs are justified by reference to authorities' view. In areas in which answers do not exist, beliefs are defended as personal opinion since the link between evidence and beliefs is unclear.

Quasi-Reflective Thinking (Stages 4 and 5)

Stage 4 <i>I'd believe Evolution if they had proof. I don't think we'll ever know. No one was there.</i>	View of Knowledge	Knowledge is uncertain and knowledge claims are idiosyncratic to the individual since situational variables (such as incorrect reporting of data, data lost over time, or disparities in access to information) dictate that knowing always involves an element of ambiguity.
	Concept of Justification	Beliefs are justified by giving reasons and using evidence, but the arguments and choice of evidence are idiosyncratic (for example, choosing evidence that fits an established belief).
Stage 5 <i>People think differently & look at problems differently. Other ideas could be as true as mine, but based on different evidence.</i>	View of Knowledge	Knowledge is contextual and subjective since it is filtered through a person's perceptions and criteria for judgment. Only interpretations of evidence, events, or issues may be known.
	Concept of Justification	Beliefs are justified within a particular context by means of the rules of inquiry for that context and by context-specific interpretations of evidence. Specific beliefs are assumed to be context specific or are balanced against other interpretations, which complicates (and sometimes delays) conclusions.

Reflective Thinking (Stages 6 and 7)

Stage 6 <i>It's very difficult to be sure. There are degrees of sureness. You come to a point at which you are sure enough for a personal stance on the issue.</i>	View of Knowledge	Knowledge is constructed into individual conclusions about illustrated problems on the basis of information from a variety of sources. Interpretations that are based on evaluations of evidence across contexts and on the evaluated opinions of reputable others can be known.
	Concept of Justification	Beliefs are justified by comparing evidence and opinion from different perspectives on an issue or across different contexts and by constructing solutions that are evaluated by criteria such as the weight of the evidence, the utility of the solution, or the pragmatic need for action.
Stage 7 <i>One can judge an argument by how well thought-out the positions are, what kinds of reasoning and evidence are used to support it, and how consistent the way one argues on this topic is as compared with other topics.</i>	View of Knowledge	Knowledge is the outcome of a process of reasonable inquiry in which solutions to ill-structured problems are constructed. The adequacy of those solutions is evaluated in terms of what is most reasonable or probable according to the current evidence, and it is reevaluated when relevant new evidence, perspectives, or tools of inquiry become available.
	Concept of Justification	Beliefs are justified probabilistically on the basis of a variety of interpretive considerations, such as the weight of the evidence, the explanatory value of the interpretations, the risk of erroneous conclusions, consequences of alternative judgments, and the interrelationships of these factors. Conclusions are defended as representing the most complete, plausible, or compelling understanding of an issue not the basis of the available evidence.