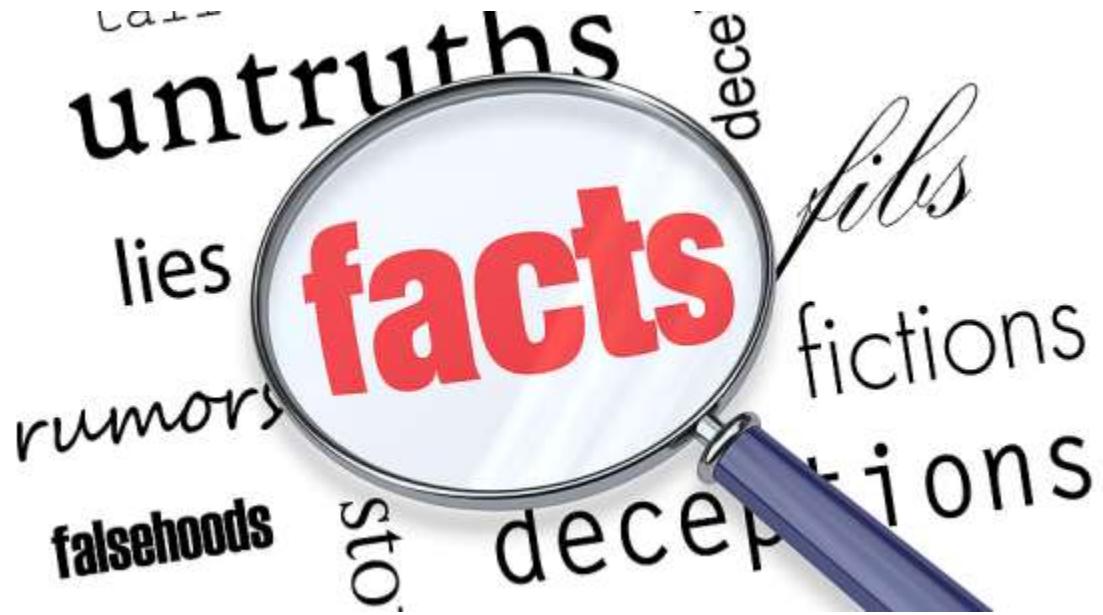


A close-up photograph of a man's face in profile, looking upwards and to the right. Three thought bubbles of increasing size originate from his forehead, pointing towards the text on the chalkboard.

A hierarchy
of thinking
skills

Key Stage 4

We often think that if we are able to reel off facts we “know” a lot. Actually the simple recollection of facts is often the most basic of thinking skills. To access higher level thinking skills (and higher grades) **we need to understand that there are many layers of thinking skills.**



Start with a very basic example:

Imagine that you are studying **fruit** as a school topic. There are different levels of thinking skills involved in this study.



Start with a very basic example:

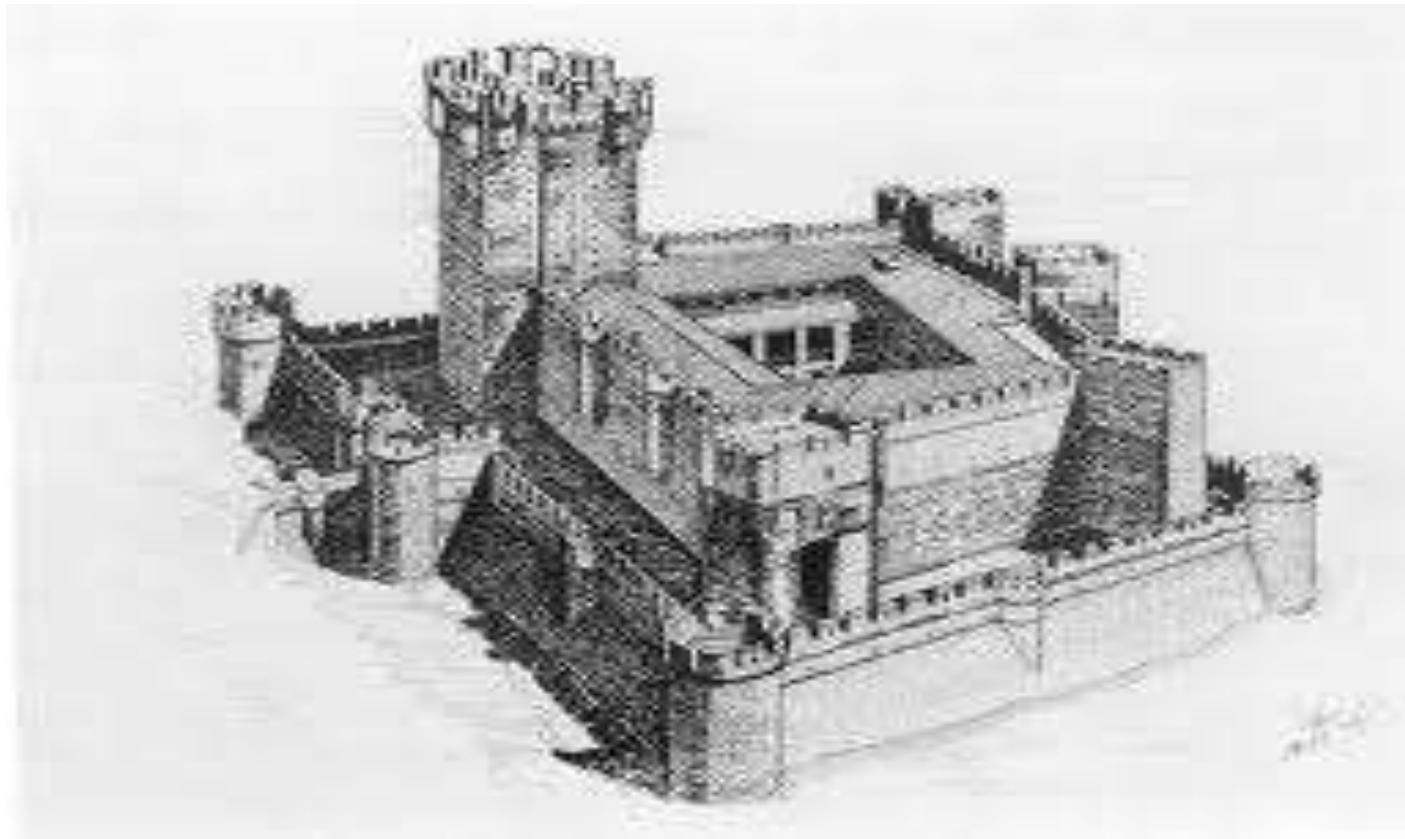
Imagine that you are studying fruit as a school topic. There are different levels of thinking skills involved in this study.

Thinking skill	Key Word	Example Task
Knowledge	What is it?	Name four fruit
Comprehension	How does it work?	Find out the calorie or vitamin content of four fruit
Analysis	Why?	Explain the health giving aspects of any specific fruit, e.g. why the high potassium content of bananas is useful in a healthy diet
Evaluation	Discuss / Judge	Explain whether bananas are healthier than apples and explain why/why not, having analysed the case both for the apples and for the bananas
Synthesis	Create	What is the most effective way of using fruit in a healthy diet?

Now think of examples of how this kind of hierarchy of thinking skills is used in your academic subjects. Note that not every task allows for all five steps, and some such hierarchies involve considerably more steps. Just apply the principle.



Now consider this drawing of a castle





Thinking skill	Key Word	Example Task
Knowledge	What is it?	Name four features of a medieval castle
Comprehension	How does it work?	How can we tell that this is a medieval castle?
Analysis	Why?	Explain the purpose of the castle walls
Evaluation	Discuss / Judge	Compare the relative merits of castles with or without moats
Synthesis	Create	Plan an effective medieval castle, using the site of our main school. Which defensive features can't you use? Which should you use?