

# Systems Thinking (glossary)

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systems thinking

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*(1) An epistemology which, when applied to human activity is based on four basic ideas: emergence, hierarchy, communication, and control as characteristics of systems. (Checkland 1999)*

*(2) A process of discovery and diagnosis - an inquiry into the governing processes underlying the problems and opportunities. (Senge 1990)*

*(3) A discipline for examining wholes, interrelationships, and patterns utilizing a specific set of tools and techniques. (Senge 1990)*

## Source

(1) Checkland, P. 1999. *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice*. New York, NY, USA: John Wiley & Sons.

(2) & (3) Senge, P.M. 1990. *The fifth discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York, NY, USA: Doubleday Business.

## Discussion

Definition (1) is the System Science view, defining system thinking as a "theory of knowledge, esp. with regard to its methods, validity, and scope", based around seeing the world as systems.

Definitions (2) and (3) focus more on systems thinking as a collection of methods for dealing with system problems. This aspect of systems thinking relates directly to the Systems Approach defined in the SEBoK.

See also the topic [What is Systems Thinking?](#)

**SEBoK v. 2.10, released 06 May 2024**

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This page was last edited on 2 May 2024, at 22:40.