

How Else and Why?

A routine for cultivating a disposition to communicate across difference.

What I want to say is...

How else can I say this? And why?

How else can I say this? And why?

(Repeat question)

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine improves students' capacity to communicate with diverse audiences by nurturing understanding of their communicative choices, keeping in mind their intention, context, and audience.

APPLICATION

When and where can I use it?

This routine is broadly applicable to many aspects of the curriculum (e.g., when students are engaging with a story, historical event, or scientific finding). It is also useful at moments when students are asked to represent ideas or phenomena (e.g., when producing a graph, a poster design, or an interpretation of a work of art). This routine can also guide regular classroom discussions or informal interactions in and outside of school. Examples of provocations include but are not limited to film excerpts, students' own writings, classroom dialogue, and works of art.

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Priming students' minds for the use of this routine may involve calling their attention to the importance of appropriate, effective, and respectful interactions and the value of reflecting on how we communicate with one another, especially with people whose lives and cultures are different from our own. Students will need an initial understanding of intention, audience, and situation as they develop skills for thinking about and engaging in complex communication. They also need to be aware of the variety of communicative means at their disposal (e.g., tone, body language).

Prior to starting the routine, you might want to explain that the routine involves an initial prompt, “What I want to say is ...” that directs them to make a statement and explain their intention for the statement. The follow-up prompts ask students to examine their original statement and revise it based on their consideration of their own intention, their audience, and the situation or context. They will consider their reframing and revising with not only the verbal language they choose to revise but also their tone and body language (if the communication is taking place as a live exchange). You can choose how many times you want students to repeat the second prompt to further revise and reflect on their communication choices.

It is important for students to share with a partner or small group their responses to the “why” question of the follow-up prompt, and to use the ideas of intention, audience, situation, context, and delivery (tone and body language) in their explanation. Without doing so, the routine risks inviting students to repeat less effective forms of communication or reinforce communication misconceptions.

This thinking routine was developed as part of the ID Global and PZ Connect projects at Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Explore the full PZ Thinking Routine Toolbox at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.