

Name, Describe, Act

A routine for the looking closely, noticing, developing memory and analyzing.

Choose an image, object, or event to examine closely or select an object, event, or topic to analyze and:

- **Name** Recalling from memory, name and make a list of all the parts or features you can remember. These will most likely be nouns, things you can point to and name.
- **Describe** For each of the things you have named, add a description. What adjectives would you add to the nouns you have listed?
- **Act** For each of the things you named, tell how they act. What are they doing? What is their function? How do they add or contribute to the whole?

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine can be used to enhance close looking, develop descriptive language, and develop working memory. Depending on the stimulus/context, it can also be used to facilitate analysis of a topic.

APPLICATION

When and where can I use it?

This routine is used to help students notice and describe an image, object, or observed event in ever increasing layers of detail. For young children or for students learning another language the routine can also help to build up language proficiency.

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

To facilitate looking closely and develop working memory, have students look silently at an image object, or event for 1-2 minutes. Instruct them to notice as much as they can. Remove the image from view and ask students to name as many things as they can that they recall, focusing on just things they can name and touch, that is specific objects (i.e. “soldiers, guns, flames, etc.” rather than “a fight” or “war”). Doing this in writing helps students keep track of items. However, it can be done orally.

Pair students up for 3-5 minutes of “Describing.” The first person names an item off their list while their partner chooses a word to describe that item. Roles are reversed and the second person then names a new item while their partner describes it. This process continues until all items are named and described. If one person names something that their partner didn’t notice, then the person describes it him or herself. An alternative approach would be to have students describe everything on their list with a single word that captures its key qualities

For the “Act” component of the routine, you want students to focus on verbs that capture an action. This segment will also take 3-5 minutes. You might want to tell students that once a verb has been used it can’t be used again. This will force students to be more imaginative and not merely keep saying objects are “sitting.” An alternative approach that young children sometimes enjoy is to pick an object from the image and then silent walk around the room “acting” as if they were that object.

Conclude by returning to the image to view. Often students’ interest and curiosity are piqued by this routine and it can be a great opportunity to introduce background on your selected image that might set the stage for further study.

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