

# Step In, Step Out, Step Back

## A routine for nurturing a disposition to take social/cultural perspectives responsibly.

**Step In:** What do you think this person might feel, believe, know, or experience?

**Step Out:** What would you like or need to learn to understand this person's perspective better?

**Step Back:** What do you notice about your own perspective and what it takes to take somebody else's?

### PURPOSE

#### What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

A routine to nurture perspective taking, recognizing that understanding others is an ongoing process that reveals as much about ourselves as it does about the people we seek to understand.

### APPLICATION

#### When and where can I use it?

This routine can be used with a broad range of topics from examining the perspectives of people in a story, a historical event, or a contemporary news article, to considering non-human perspectives such as species in an ecosystem, to collective perspectives such as interest groups in a given conflict. You may choose an image, video, story, or classroom incident to ground students' thinking.

### LAUNCH

#### What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

When you start the routine, remind students that in the first prompt, "step in," they are reasoning with the information they have, which is always limited. You may point to the speculative nature of their interpretations. In the second prompt, "step out," you invite learners to see that there is more to understanding another person than the first impression they as individuals construct. As they share their views, students may detect stereotypes in their own initial thinking and feel uneasy about "having been wrong" in their initial thinking. It is important to normalize the fact that we all have first impressions of others and others have them of us, and that this routine is designed to help us all get better at understanding other persons' perspectives beyond someone's own initial assumptions. In the final prompt, "step back," students may explore how prior knowledge, cultural, and/or linguistic perspectives can inform or obscure their interpretation(s). This routine lends itself to small groups. You may invite students to write their responses to each question individually on separate small pieces of paper (sticky squares can be helpful but aren't necessary) first and then share.

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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](https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines).