

Take a Stand

A routine for scaffolding perspective-taking.

Choose a digital dilemma to analyze. (If you are choosing a non-PZ developed digital dilemma, consider the important criteria for dilemmas to work well with this routine.)

Take a Stand

Individually, read or listen to the dilemma and consider your thoughts about it. What's your view on the dilemma? Make notes that help explain your perspective.

Stand Back

In small groups or as a class, share your individual perspective(s) about the dilemma and listen to the perspectives of your fellow students.

Look Again

Individually, look again at your original response. What had you not considered that other people brought up? Have you changed your perspective, and if so, what changed? How has your thinking shifted after hearing your classmates' perspectives— even if you haven't changed your mind?

Look Beyond

Finally, look beyond this specific dilemma or case. Consider: How does the dilemma remind you of other situations explored in class or that you've seen, heard about, or experienced?

Optional: Complicate

If using a dilemma in our compilation, consider the provided prompts that "complicate" the scenario. Or, if you used your own dilemma, consider how your response might change if certain details in the dilemma shifted (e.g., who was involved, the relationships between the people involved, when /where it happened, etc.) Discuss these questions in your group and share responses.

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This thinking routine scaffolds perspective taking especially in situations and dilemmas that lack clear right or wrong answers, especially those involving privacy, community, and civic life. By using this routine repeatedly, students develop the thinking dispositions to: 1) slow down and self-reflect, and 2) explore and engage with others' perspectives, 3) seek and evaluate evidence, and 4) envision options and potential impacts. The routine supports students to engage in the habit of considering/reconsidering their own and others' perspectives.

APPLICATION

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Choose a digital dilemma either from the PZ and Common Sense-developed dilemmas here, pull a relevant story from the news/current events, or develop your own dilemma that captures a tension you want to explore. Print copies of the “Take a Stand” handout or provide students with a link to the electronic version of the template. Feel free to revise, reword, or adjust this activity to make it work for your class. You know your students best! The four-step routine helps students think through the dilemma and reflect on their own views and values as they listen to perspectives that differ from their own.

This activity can be used anywhere educators see a connection to their learning goals, especially where students can discuss or debate an issue about digital life with each other. For example, in: advisory period, where students are learning social-emotional learning (SEL) or character education skills. library or media class, where students are learning about digital citizenship and technology.

Social studies, particularly related to timely civic and political issues, free speech, and constitutional protections (e.g., in U.S. contexts, the First Amendment). English language arts (ELA), particularly relevant to developing students’ skills for argumentative or persuasive essay writing. student council or peer leadership, where students are exploring life decisions and being a good leader.

Students find more meaning in the Take a Stand activity—and take it more seriously—when teachers make explicit connections to class curriculum and learning goals. These connections might be easy to find when the dilemma relates to the class material (e.g., talking about the protest dilemma in a civics course). If not, name other connections to course topics and learning goals.

LAUNCH

When and where can I use it?

This activity can be done in varied amounts of time, and it often expands to fill whatever time teachers give it. You can get through the routine in 30 minutes, or allow the discussion to expand for a longer block. This activity works best with a whole class, whether in the classroom or using synchronous video instruction in distance learning.

As you plan for discussions of dilemmas, it’s important to remember that these discussions will surface disagreements that provide important learning opportunities but also can trigger discomfort. It’s valuable to know that you aren’t looking for “right” or “wrong” answers. While acknowledging that no set of norms will keep the conversation safe for everyone, it’s also helpful to establish or revisit classroom norms before you dive in.

Consider the following suggested classroom norms (informed by norms from Facing History and Ourselves):

- Listen for understanding. Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.
- Make comments using “I” statements.
- Think with your head and your heart.
- Acknowledge the difference between intention and impact.

If one student’s perspective on a dilemma is not shared by most of the class, be alert that they might feel understandably vulnerable in their stance. It can also be challenging if a student feels personally attacked by other students’ perspectives. Think about your classroom climate and your student group when deciding how to modify the routine and/or which dilemmas to cover. If you’re looking for more support, consider these two resources: *Courageous Conversations*, *Cult of Pedagogy* or *Contracting*, *Facing History and Ourselves*.

As you consider how to facilitate this thinking routine and the discussion, first, choose a digital dilemma that you want students to analyze. Be sure to read the *Keys for Using Dilemmas* to incorporate these strategies into the lesson. Make a copy of the [Take a Stand student handout](#). Copy and paste the dilemma and the “complicated questions” into the worksheet. Use the teacher guidance below, which mirrors the sections in the student handout, to support students through each step of the thinking routine. Note that some steps are done individually and others are done as a class. To provide educators with additional tips for using the routine, we have created a [teacher’s guide to the “Take a Stand” handout](#).

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