

Feelings and Options: Educator Guide

A thinking routine that supports social skills and thoughtful decision-making for digital dilemmas.

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What is Feelings and Options?

Feelings and Options is a four-step thinking routine that supports students' social skills and thoughtful decision-making for the digital dilemmas they face in everyday life, particularly in the Ring of Responsibility focused on community and close ties. The routine packs a lot into four steps: It scaffolds perspective taking, empathic problem-solving, ethics spotting, and communication skills for social dilemmas of digital life.



How can it be used?

Feelings and Options is a thinking routine for engaging with social and emotional dilemmas. It's designed to support students in exploring different perspectives and practicing language that supports constructive and kind communication. By using this routine repeatedly, students develop the sensitivity to recognize digital dilemmas and the digital citizenship dispositions to: 1). explore and care about others' perspectives, 2). envision options for dilemmas and possible impacts, and 3). take action. This routine is designed to be paired with digital dilemmas. **Choose a dilemma from the set below**, or develop your own dilemma and insert it in the **handout**.

Each step of Feelings and Options can be done by students individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a whole-class discussion. Consider what might work best for your students. Educators often use a mix of individual reflection, pair-share, and whole-group discussion.

Where can it be used? How much class time will it take?

This activity can be used anywhere educators see a connection to their learning goals in digital citizenship, social and emotional learning (SEL), and character education. For example, in:

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- advisory period, where students are learning SEL or character education skills.
- library or media class, where students are learning about digital citizenship and technology.
- health or wellness class, where students are learning about healthy relationships.
- English language arts (ELA), connected to any reading that includes relational dilemmas or social-emotional conflict.
- special topics classes, like religion, leadership, or student council.

This activity is flexible! Students can complete the thinking routine in about 15 minutes. You can extend the steps with more discussion and expand the activity so it's a special unit with follow-ups over a week or month. We recommend that you use this thinking routine as just that: a repeated routine. This helps students internalize the steps and thinking we want to support outside of the classroom.

How do you facilitate this activity?

First, **choose a digital dilemma** that you want your students to analyze. Be sure to read the **Keys for Using Dilemmas** to incorporate these strategies into the lesson.

- Make a copy of the **Feelings and Options** handout. Copy and paste the digital dilemma and "complicate questions" into the worksheet.
- Use the teacher guidance below, which mirrors the steps of the student handout, to support students through each step of the thinking routine.

(Insert dilemma name here.)

(Insert dilemma here.)posting pictures

**Identify: Who are the different people involved in the dilemma?
What challenge are they facing?**

Encourage students to write down all of the people who are involved (e.g., "The people involved are: Tim, Jason, and Tim's parents). The dilemma they are facing is that Jason feels overwhelmed by how much Tim is texting him, but Tim is having a hard time and needs a lot of support from his friends.")

**Feel: What do you think each person in the dilemma is *feeling*?
Why might the situation be hard or challenging for each of them?**

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Encourage students to take perspectives of how all characters involved are feeling. Prompt students to clearly label the feelings, and describe why they might feel that way. Ask:

- Are there any other ways the people in the situation might be feeling?
- How might additional people (e.g., friends not named in the dilemma) feel about the situation?"

Imagine: *Imagine* options for how the situation could be handled. Come up with as many ideas as possible. There's no one "right" answer! Then, highlight which option might lead to the most positive outcome, where most people feel good or taken care of.

Have students imagine many ways of handling the situation, regardless of outcome. Then encourage them to select the dilemma that's most beneficial for everyone involved in the dilemma. Ask:

- Are there any downsides to the suggestion you came up with?"

Say: Thinking more about the idea you chose for handling the situation, what could the people involved say?

First: How would they say it?

<input type="checkbox"/> In person	<input type="checkbox"/> Call or FaceTime	<input type="checkbox"/> Text
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct/private message	<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Second: What would they say? Write out the conversation.

After students write out the text, encourage them to consider whether they would really say the words they have come up with. Ask:

- Do you think the person(s) involved would really say that?
- Could you see yourself actually saying/sending a message like this, if you were the person in the dilemma? why, or why not?
- what if the person instead said ____?
- what if person B didn't respond that way? what could person A do or say next?

Complicate (optional)

Discuss these questions in your group, and share responses. Be sure to hear a range of perspectives—the more perspectives, the better!

- (Insert complicate questions here.)

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If you have time for further wrap-up, ask students: *What is one thing you're taking away from doing Feelings and Options?* This is a great way for students to affirm the different thinking skills they practice (e.g., perspective taking, considering different options, and anticipating tricky conversations).

Which dilemmas can you use with Feelings and Options?

Use any of the following digital dilemmas with students. You can copy and paste the dilemma and the complicated questions into the [Feelings and Options handout](#).

1. **"Finding Boundaries"**: Jason's classmate Tim started texting Jason a lot, every day. Jason and Tim were friendly, and Jason had always liked Tim. At first, Jason was happy to be talking to Tim outside of school. But Tim was having a hard time—Tim's parents were fighting a lot, and Tim's life at home had gotten really stressful. Jason wanted to be kind and supportive and always tried to be when Tim texted. Then the texting became overwhelming for Jason. Jason cared about Tim and didn't want to make his situation any worse by not being a good friend. Jason was also worried about Tim's mental health. At the same time, the texting felt burdensome and was also starting to take a toll. Jason thought he needed to set some boundaries, but he wasn't sure how and didn't want to make things harder for Tim.

Thinking Routine

Have students use the Feelings & Options thinking routine and handout: **Identify** → **Feel** → **Imagine** → **Say**.

Complicate questions

- What if Tim and Jason were best friends?
- What if Tim shared that the fighting was escalating to violence?
- What if Jason and Tim's parents were good friends?
- What if Jason became worried that Tim might harm himself?
- What if Tim started texting in the middle of every night, when Jason needed to sleep?

(This dilemma is in the [Rewarding Relationships](#) lesson for 10th grade.)

2. **"Missing Out"**: For months, Aida and her three closest friends had been waiting for a new movie to come out. The movie was based on one of their favorite books, and they promised they would see it all together and then go out for pizza. On the movie's opening weekend, Aida had a last-minute emergency and wasn't able to go. The others decided to go anyway because they had been really looking forward to it. That night, they posted constantly about their fun and new

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inside jokes. Aida wanted to keep connected but seeing the constant posts bummed her out. She felt like no one even cared that she had missed out on their plans.

Thinking Routine

Have students use the Feelings & Options thinking routine and handout: **Identify** → **Feel** → **Imagine** → **Say**.

Complicate questions

- What if it was the last night that the movie was playing in the theater?
- What if it was a regular sleepover rather than a movie outing? Should the friends reschedule or stick with their plans without Aida?
- What if the friends posted comments and captions on their pics saying that they were sorry Aida was not with them (e.g., @Aida wish you were here)?
- Does it make a difference why Aida couldn't attend?
- What if Aida's emergency was that her mom was in the hospital?
- What if it was that she had been grounded for sneaking out of her house?

(This dilemma is in the **My Social Media Life** lesson for seventh grade.)

3. **"Embarrassing Story"**: Derryl recorded a humiliating video of Jared and posted it on his story for everyone to see. Jared was mortified and asked Derryl to please stop and take the video down. Derryl didn't listen. He thought the video was really funny. Plus, a lot of people were commenting and saying Derryl was hilarious for posting it. By the next day, it seemed like everyone at school had seen the video. Jared tried to act like it didn't bother him, but he was really embarrassed and went straight home after school instead of going to the big basketball game he and all his friends had been looking forward to.

Thinking Routine

Have students use the Feelings & Options thinking routine and handout: **Identify** → **Feel** → **Imagine** → **Say**.

Complicate questions

- What if Jared had posted a rude comment or embarrassing pic of Derryl the week before? In other words, what if this was a "revenge" post?
- What if Derryl shared the video with only a group chat of four to five close friends instead of his story?
- What if Derryl posted a public apology to Jared right after sharing the video?

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(This dilemma is in the [What You Send in "That Moment When ..."](#) lesson for ninth grade.)

4. **"Fake Account"**: John and Cat had been close friends since elementary school. One day, Cat discovered a private Instagram account with John's picture on the profile. Cat already followed John on Instagram, and although a bunch of other kids from their school were listed as followers, she immediately suspected that this wasn't one of his actual accounts. Cat requested to follow the account. Once she was approved, she saw what had been posted: a series of memes that showed pictures of John with anti-gay captions and comments on each post. Several of their classmates had even joined in and were also posting hurtful comments about John.

Thinking Routine

Have students use the Feelings & Options thinking routine and handout: [Identify](#) → [Feel](#) → [Imagine](#) → [Say](#).

Complicate questions

- Does it make a difference if John is gay? Why, or why not?
- What if Cat immediately unfollowed the account and pretended she had never seen it?
- What if Cat reported the account to Instagram and it didn't get removed?

(This dilemma is in the [Responding to Online Hate Speech](#) lesson for eighth grade.)

5. **"Exposed in Group Chat"**: Juan's close friends had a group chat that they'd used for a while. Normally, their conversations were about sports, people from school, memes, and other random things. His friend Marcos recently started dating Sasha, who was in their grade at school. One day, Marcos forwarded a screenshot to the chat with the caption, "Score!" Juan could tell from a quick glance at the screenshot that it was a mostly naked picture of Sasha. Juan and Sasha had been friends since elementary school, and he immediately felt uneasy knowing Sasha definitely wouldn't have wanted the picture shared.

Thinking Routine

Have students use the Feelings & Options thinking routine and handout: [Identify](#) → [Feel](#) → [Imagine](#) → [Say](#).

Complicate questions

- Does it matter where/how the picture is shared? (What if the picture were sent on Snapchat? What if it were sent by text?)

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- Does it make a difference how many other people are in the group chat? (What if it's two other people? What if it's 20?)
- What if Sasha had been pressured and hadn't even wanted to send the picture in the first place?
- What if Marcos showed his friends the picture on his phone but didn't send it to them? Would this still be breaking Sasha's trust?

6. **"Digital Dares"**: Donelle's group of friends had recently gotten into dares. At lunch or during class, they would dare each other to say something strange or funny to a classmate or teacher, or do harmless things like wear their shirt inside out. Sometimes the dares got pretty intense, but his friend Gabe would get mad if everyone didn't go along with it, so they usually did. One night over group chat, Gabe dared everyone to message some of their classmates sexual words and comments. Donelle knew it was a bad idea. Even if he didn't get in trouble, the messages might offend his classmates. But Donelle also didn't want to risk Gabe making fun of him or being angry for not doing it.

Thinking Routine

Have students use the Feelings & Options thinking routine and handout: **Identify** → **Feel** → **Imagine** → **Say**.

Complicate questions

- What if Gabe threatened Donelle if he didn't do the dare?
- What if Donelle had already been suspended from school for something else and worried that he might get in serious trouble if he sent the messages?
- What if the person whom Gabe wanted Donelle to message was Donelle's crush?
- Does it make a difference what the dare is?

7. **"Hurtful Meme"**: Maya saw that one of her friends, Luke, had "liked" a meme. The meme showed a picture of diamonds next to a picture of immigration officials. It said, "Mexicans are worried about the wrong ICE right now." As soon as she saw the meme, Maya felt uneasy. There were tons of Mexican students at her school, including Maya herself. Many of them were U.S. citizens, but some were not. The meme hit close to home. Plus, everyone could see that Luke had "liked" it. Luke was their class president, and the students had elected him to represent them. Maya also considered him one of her close friends.

Thinking Routine

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Have students use the Feelings & Options thinking routine and handout: **Identify** → **Feel** → **Imagine** → **Say**.

Complicate questions

- What if Luke had reshared the meme instead of just "liking" it?
- What if you learned that Luke was actually the creator?
- What if Luke was himself an undocumented student?
- Does it make a difference whether Maya is undocumented? Why, or why not?
- What if this were part of a pattern of Luke liking memes like this all the time?

(This dilemma is in the **Responding to Online Hate Speech** lesson for eighth grade.)

8. **"Risky Chat"**: Sara loves taking pictures and posting them to Instagram. A few months ago, she noticed alex_eastwest13 liked several of her photos and commented, "you are so talented!" Sara was flattered. Then she received a private message from alex_eastwest13 asking if she was a professional photographer or if she wanted to be one someday. Sara responded that it was her dream to be one when she grew up. Now they talk a lot through private messaging. Sara also posts comments on alex_eastwest13's photos, which are mostly of random objects and nature scenes. Last week, alex_eastwest13 asked if she would post more selfies because "i think u r beautiful." Then alex_eastwest13 also messaged her a cell number so she could send more personal pictures. "Just don't tell anyone I gave you this," alex_eastwest13 wrote.

Thinking Routine

Have students use the Feelings & Options thinking routine and handout: **Identify** → **Feel** → **Imagine** → **Say**.

Complicate questions

- What if Sara tries ignoring alex_eastwest13 but this person keeps finding ways to communicate with Sara?
- What if Sara politely says no to alex_eastwest13's request and alex_eastwest13 gets upset?
- What if alex_eastwest13 says he has met some of Sara's friends before?

(This dilemma is in the **Chatting Safely Online** lesson for sixth grade.)

How do you facilitate this activity in a distance learning classroom?

This activity can be done individually by students, with or without synchronous discussion time. Check out different ways you can facilitate in a distance learning classroom:

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1. Individual completion: Copy the Feelings and Options student handout or add it to your Google Drive, and send it to students through Google Classroom or your learning management system. Invite students to complete the activity on their own. Review their responses, referring to the teacher guidance for support.
2. Individual completion with synchronous discussion: Have students complete the activity on their own, but leave time in your video meetings for discussion. Be sure to leave time to discuss the last step, "Say," and invite students to share their ideas.
3. Individual completion with asynchronous discussion: Have students complete the activity on their own, and invite them to use a class dialogue or discussion tool such as Flipgrid or to post comments within your learning management system.

What lessons include Feelings and Options?

Feelings and Options is included as the main activity in the following lessons from the

Digital Citizenship Curriculum:

- Grade 6: **Chatting Safely Online**
- Grade 7: **My Social Media Life**
- Grade 8: **Sexting and Relationships**
- Grade 8: **Responding to Online Hate Speech**
- Grade 9: **Chatting and Red Flags**
- Grade 9: **What You Send in "That Moment When ..."**
- Grade 10: **Rewarding Relationships**