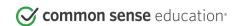# Keys to Using Digital Dilemmas

What is a digital dilemma? A digital dilemma is a tricky situation that can occur in digital life—and it doesn't always have an obvious right or wrong answer. Even when someone has been hurt or wronged, the right way to respond in a digital dilemma is often unclear. Acknowledging this complexity helps students dig in to the messiness of real issues they face, and come up with thoughtful and realistic action steps. When using dilemmas as teaching tools with students, we encourage educators to use the strategies below.

- **Stay impartial.** You may have your own stance on a dilemma, but it's strategic to remain mostly impartial when you're the facilitator. Students knowing what a teacher thinks can close off opportunities for deep thinking. This doesn't mean you should stay quiet! Rather, assume a questioning role and aim to push students' thinking in new directions. Use question prompts in the **Feelings and Options** and **Take a Stand** educator guides to raise considerations that aren't coming up, and introduce new perspectives when you see the opportunity.

- **Names matter!** Feel free to change the names featured in a dilemma. This is useful especially if you have students in your class who have the same names as the people in the dilemma. The names shouldn't be a source of silliness or distraction! Changing names is also an easy way to change the assumed genders of the people involved. You can also modify the dilemma by replacing one of the names with a blank line and asking students to add their own names to the dilemma (e.g., replace "Jason" with a blank in the Feelings and Options "Finding Boundaries" dilemma, or replace "Aida" with a blank in the Feelings and Options "Missing Out" dilemma). You might find that this strategy supports students' perspective taking.

- **Personalize it.** Ask students to think about (but not necessarily share out loud) their personal connections to the dilemma. For example, in the Feelings and Options "Missing Out" dilemma, ask students: *Can you relate to this situation in any way? Can you think of a time when you felt left out? Most of us have had an experience of being left out from a plan with our friends, whether it's a sports game, the movies, or a sleepover.* Or, in the Take a Stand "The Protest" dilemma, you could ask: *Can you relate to this situation in any way? Have you ever seen someone's identity exposed online?* Use the question prompts and guidance in the **Feelings and Options** and **Take a Stand** educator guides.

- **"Tell me more!"** Students crave details and often ask for more information about dilemmas. Our aim is to give students enough information so they can dig in to a dilemma, but not so much that it seems like there is only one "obvious" answer. When students ask for more information, try asking questions back. For example, in the Take a Stand "Streaming Fights Online" dilemma, if a student is asking what people in a dilemma were fighting about, try asking: *What do you think they could have been fighting about? How would it change your response if it were X versus Y? If a student is asking how old the people in the dilemma are, try asking: How would it be different if they were 12*

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versus 17? Each dilemma is also accompanied by "complicate questions," which are prompts you can use to probe and deepen students' thinking.

- **Make it relevant; make it real.** Identify connections between the dilemma and current events or situations. Or, create your own dilemma that aligns with issues you know are most relevant to your students and community. Teachers have created dilemmas about topics like "cancel culture," racist memes, and inappropriate theme parties.

- **Establish norms.** Dilemma discussions can bring up disagreements, which provide important opportunities for learning, but they can also trigger discomfort. While acknowledging that no set of norms will keep the conversation perfect for everyone, it's helpful to establish or revisit classroom norms before you dive in. Consider the following suggested classroom 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.
    - If someone says something that hurts or offends you, do not attack the person. Acknowledge that the comment—not the person—hurt your feelings and explain why.

If one student's perspective on a dilemma is not shared by most of the class, be aware that they might feel understandably vulnerable in their stance. Think about your classroom climate and your student group when deciding which dilemmas to cover.