

Making It Fair

1. Frame the task. Present and clarify an issue of fairness. The class will be thinking about things to do to make the situation more fair: now, in the future, or to change the situation so it would have been fair in the past.
2. Brainstorm. Ask students to brainstorm ideas for things they might do to “make it fair.”
3. Sort. Sort the list into actions that relate to making the situation fair in the past, now, or for the future.
4. Evaluate. Ask students to pick one idea from the list that they think has the most merit and expand on it, either verbally or in writing.

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine is about identifying and evaluating specific actions that might make a situation fair. This routine involves students in generating and evaluating options. Initially the focus should be on an open generation of ideas without evaluation. Later, students evaluate their ideas and justify them. This routine helps students see that fairness and unfairness are not merely judgments that one makes but that these situations also invite direct actions by finding ways to repair, prevent, or preclude unfairness.

Application: When and where can I use it?

This routine can be used to with issues of fairness that naturally arise in the classroom, around issues of fairness that have been studied, or as a way of closing a discussion of fairness that you may have had using one of the other routines.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Present and clarify the dilemma to the class. Everyone should agree that the situation was not fair, at least from some perspectives. To facilitate openness in the brainstorming portion, you might want to have students think in terms of “I wonder might happen if...” As students talk, record their ideas on the board or chart paper. You may want to label the paper “I wonder might happen if ...” to further encourage students to think about possibilities. When you begin to sort students’ ideas, if there is a category where are not many ideas, have students generate additional ideas for that category.

Share your experience with this thinking routine on social media using the hashtags #PZThinkingRoutines and #MakingItFair.



This thinking routine was developed as part of the Visible Thinking project at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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