

Voice and Choice

A protocol for looking critically at content, considering perspectives and representation, and then redesigning or reimagining that content from one's own perspective.

Begin by looking closely at the content (e.g., art, writing, etc.). Then do the following:

- **Consider the context:** Where was the content made? When was it made? Who made it? What else was going on at this place and time?
- **Maker choices:** What choices do you think the maker(s) made when designing this content? Why do you think they made these choices?
- **Voices present:** Whose voices are present in this content? What perspectives are represented?
- **Voices missing:** Whose voices are missing from this content? What perspectives are not represented? Why do you think that is?
- **My voice:** What's your voice? What perspectives do you bring to this content?
- **My choice(s):** What could you do to redesign or reimagine this content to better represent your perspective(s)? Why? How might it look differently?
- **Interact:** Share your redesign with a peer or peers. Ask them to answer the questions: Whose voices and perspectives do they see represented in this content? Whose voices and perspectives do they think are missing? Ask yourself: is there anyone else you might share your redesign with to get a different perspective?
- **Reflect:** Now that you have received feedback, look closely at your re-design and consider whose voices and perspectives are missing from the redesigned content. If the feedback from your peer(s) is not what you intended or expected, is that okay with you? If not, how might you continue to redesign this content? Finally, and importantly, ask yourself: what do you think the maker would think of your redesign?

**NOTE: Whenever the word "content" is used above, you may want to replace this word to be specific to the work of your classroom. "Content" could be a poem, work of art, historical essay, social media post, architectural structure, news article, piece of digital media, environmental plan, etc.*

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Voice and Choice, cont'd

Some suggested practices for using the Voice and Choice protocol

The My Voice Step

In order to scaffold the “my voice” step, students may need support considering their own perspectives and sensitivities. We suggest working with the Agency by Design Think, Feel, Care thinking routine between the “voices missing” and “my voice” steps. Or, you may want to offer some prompts for students to consider their own perspectives. Some suggested prompts include:

- *What people or communities do I represent?*
- *What do I care about? What's important to me?*
- *What's my point of view?*
- *What aspects of my identity, background, and experiences influence my point of view?*

Remember: perspective-taking can be challenging

The Voice and Choice protocol is intended to support learners to frame how they understand and engage with the various content they encounter. Considering the who, where, why, questions of representation and personal perspectives are all important moves toward critically consuming art, media, writing, etc. It is worth noting that sometimes young people may want to redesign a piece of content not from their own perspective, but rather from a voice not represented in the content (though sometimes the two may overlap). We suggest encouraging learners to continue to speak from the “I” and rather than take on another person’s perspective, use the redesign as an opportunity to explain why they believe the missing voice(s) are important.

Why interact and reflect?

Offering learners opportunities to share their redesigned or reimagined content with others encourages them to both consider different perspectives and viewpoints while also critically reflect on their own perspectives and how their design choices relate to those perspectives. The Interact and Reflect steps of the Voice and Choice protocol encourage learners to develop increased self-awareness and sensitivity to design choices. These steps also provide the opportunity for learners to consider and enact intentionality while designing.

Keep on asking “Why?”

It is important to embed opportunities for learners to ask “Why?” throughout the protocol. Asking why is emphasized in the following steps of the protocol: maker choices, voices missing, my voice. Why questions can be inserted into other parts of the protocol, especially during the Think, Feel, Care routine (see above). Support learners to think about why by routinely using the following prompts: “What

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This thinking routine was developed as part of the Agency by Design project at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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