

STEP IN - STEP OUT - STEP BACK

NURTURING A DISPOSITION TO TAKE SOCIAL/CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE RESPONSIBLY

Step-in step-out step-back

Choose	Identify a person or agent in the situation you are examining
Step In:	Given what you see and know at this time, what do you think this person might feel, believe, know, or experience?
Step out:	What else would you like or need to learn to understand this person's perspective better?
Step back	Given your exploration of this perspective so far, what do you notice about your own perspective and what it takes to take somebody else's?

STEP IN - STEP OUT - STEP BACK: Q & A

Why consider this routine? While as human beings we are typically curious about the experiences and views of others, taking social perspective is a challenging cognitive and emotional task. A respectful approach to perspective taking requires that we avoid building stereotypes of others or projecting our own values and beliefs onto others. Understanding another person's world can be exciting and revealing. Yet perspective taking is also challenging and calls for practice over time.

What kind of global thinking does this routine encourage? This routine invites learners to take other people's perspectives e.g. religious, linguistic, cultural, class, generational; recognize that understanding others is an ongoing, often uncertain process; and understand that our efforts to take perspective can reveal as much about ourselves as they can about the people we are seeking to understand. The routine helps learners to identify individuals with various perspectives in a given situation; provide evidence for thoughts, values and feelings these individuals may hold; and explain how societal or more macro-forces—particularly roles and relationships—shape their perspectives. Scaffolding for healthy skepticism and reflection invites learners to take note of the biases and preferences that shape their understanding of others.

What kinds of topics, themes and provocations might invite the use of this routine? This routine can be adapted to a broad range of topics, from examining the perspectives of agents in a story, a historical event or a contemporary news article, to considering non-human perspectives such as species in an ecosystem, or collective perspectives such as interest groups in a given conflict. The routine can also be used to examine students' own perspectives in classroom situations or as they seek, for example, to

create a math expression for a given problem. You may choose an image, a video, a story, or a classroom incident as provocation on which to ground students' thinking.

How might I prepare students for this routine? It is important for students to have enough basic information about the perspectives they will examine to support an informed initial guess. It is important to help students avoid creating a "fictional character" that may confirm rather than challenge cultural stereotypes. When setting up the routine for students, you may want to highlight that understanding how others view the world can be exciting and sometimes challenging, setting expectations for complex reasoning. You may also mark a distinction between a more imaginative "step-in" and a more inquiry driven "step-out."

What are some tips for carrying out this routine? In "step-in" make sure learners understand that they are reasoning with the information that they have, which is always limited. You may point to the speculative nature of their interpretations. In "step out," invite learners to see that there is more to understanding another person than the first impression they construct. As they share their views, students may detect stereotypes in their own initial thinking and feel uneasy about "having been wrong" in their guess. It is important to normalize the fact that we all have first impressions of others and others have them of us, and point to the importance of committing to understanding other persons' perspectives beyond initial assumptions. Under "step back," learners may explore how prior knowledge, cultural or linguistic perspectives inform or obscure their interpretation. Like other routines, this one lends itself well to small groups. Indeed, the different perspectives learners hold might become more visible through dialog. You may invite students to write their responses to each question individually on separate Post-its first and then share.

What may we look for in student thinking? Generally speaking, successful perspective takers are able to (a) identify perspectives of various individuals in a given situation (b) provide evidence for thoughts, values and feelings these individuals may hold and (c) explain how societal or more macro-forces—particularly roles and relationships—shape their perspectives. Importantly, experienced perspective takers approach their own interpretation of others' views with a healthy dose of skepticism. In examining students' responses, you may look for some of these qualities of thought. Often, using this routine will enable you to detect misconceptions in student's thinking. For example, you may identify biases, ethnocentric beliefs or stereotypes that will need to be transformed by nurturing perspective taking capacities that invite students to see complexity and dignity in human experiences especially that of people whose lives differ from their own.

You may consider students' responses to the routine prompts as the beginning, rather than the end, of a conversation about perspectives. As you listen carefully to students' arguments you may keep some of the following questions in mind: (1) are students acknowledging that a person or group has a perspective that is similar or different from their own? (2) can they position such perspectives—i.e. providing evidence for why a person may feel or think the way they do (e.g. taking into account the role and relationship a person has). Do they view perspectives as a matter of a person having information or lacking it? Can they imagine themselves in the roles of others? Can they see that perspectives are influenced by systems and broader social values?