

# Step In - Step Out - Step Back

*A routine for 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?

### **Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?**

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.

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.

### **Application: When and where can I use it?**

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.

### **Launch: What are some tips for starting and using 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."

*Continued on the next page.*

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



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

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# Step In - Step Out - Step Back, cont'd

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 is Global Competence?**

Global competence can be defined as the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance (Boix Mansilla & Jackson 2011). Globally competent students prepare for complex societies and a global economy by learning how to investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, framing and making sense of significant issues. How do migrant populations adapt to their new places of work and living? What tools do governments have to promote economic development and eradicate extreme poverty? What is an ecosystem and how do different ecosystems around the world work? Globally competent students also learn to recognize their own and others’ perspectives, articulating and explaining such perspectives thoughtfully, empathically and respectfully. Globally competent students can communicate across differences, bridging cultural, linguistic, economic and religious divides – two additional capacities that are especially important to today’s fragmented and interconnected societies. Most importantly, in order to be prepared to participate and work in today’s world students, must learn to take responsible action. They need to learn to identify opportunities for productive action to develop and carry out informed plans. Prepared students, this framework suggests, view themselves as informed, thoughtful, compassionate and effective citizens and workers in changing times (Boix Mansilla & Jackson 2011).

Global competence is cast as a capacity to understand – meaning, broadly speaking, to use disciplinary concepts, theories, ideas, methods or findings in novel situations, to solve problems, produce explanations, create products or interpret phenomena in novel ways (Boix Mansilla & Gardner 1999). It focuses on issues of global significance and action to improve conditions; learning must be visibly relevant to students and the world. When significance is considered, global competence curricula becomes a call for authenticity, for carefully looking to the contemporary world for topics that matter most to examine (Perkins 2015).

Finally, “global competence” as a disposition speaks of student ownership and long-lasting transformation. Thinking dispositions, Project Zero researchers have proposed, involve the ability to think with information, the sensitivity to opportunities in the real world to do that, and the inclination to do so over time (Perkins et al 1993, Tishman et al 1993). Dispositions are about the “residuals” of learning beyond formal contexts (Ritchhart 2014); they are about the “kind of person” a student will become (Boix Mansilla & Gardner 2000). Broadly considered, global competence dispositions include:

- A disposition to inquire about the world (for example, engaging with questions of significance, exploring local-global connections, and seeking information beyond familiar environments, describing, explaining and developing a position about the world).
- A disposition to understand multiple perspectives--others’ and their own (for example, considering cultural contexts, resisting stereotypes, and valuing our shared human dignity-- especially as students interact with others whose paths differ greatly from their own).
- A disposition toward respectful dialog (communicating across differences listening generously, sharing courageously, openly and appropriately given their audience and context).
- A disposition toward taking responsible action (being inclined to see and frame opportunities to improve conditions, and collaborating with others, and mobilize themselves to act).

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