Take a Stand: Educator Guide

A thinking routine for exploring perspectives on dilemmas about community and civic life.

What is Take a Stand?

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What is Take a Stand?

Take a Stand is a thinking routine designed to be used alongside digital dilemmas that lack clear right or wrong answers, particularly dilemmas relevant to privacy, community, and civic life. It's a four-step routine that gets students in the habit of considering and reconsidering their own and others' perspectives. This routine directs consideration to the outermost ring in the Rings of Responsibility: the wider world and civic life.

How can it be used?

Choose a digital dilemma from the set below, or develop your own and insert in the Take a Stand handout. Feel free to revise, reword, or adjust this activity to make it work for your class. You know your students best! The four-step routine helps students think through the dilemma and reflect on their own views and values as they listen to perspectives that differ from their own. By using this routine repeatedly, students develop the digital citizenship dispositions to: 1). slow down and self-reflect, and 2). explore and care about others' perspectives, 3). seek and evaluate evidence, and 4). envision options and potential impacts.

Where can it be used? How much class time will it take?

This activity can be used anywhere educators see a connection to their learning goals, especially where students can discuss or debate an issue about digital life with each other. For example, in:
- advisory period, where students are learning social-emotional learning (SEL) or character education skills.
- library or media class, where students are learning about digital citizenship and technology.

- social studies, particularly related to timely civic and political issues, free speech, and constitutional protections (e.g., in U.S. contexts, the First Amendment).
- English language arts (ELA), particularly relevant to developing students' skills for argumentative or persuasive essay writing.
- student council or peer leadership, where students are exploring life decisions and being a good leader.

Students find more meaning in the Take a Stand activity—and take it more seriously—when teachers make explicit connections to class curriculum and learning goals. These connections might be easy to find when the dilemma relates to the class material (e.g., talking about the protest dilemma in a civics course). If not, name other connections to course topics and learning goals.

This activity can be done in varied amounts of time, and it often expands to fill whatever time teachers give it. You can get through the routine in 30 minutes, or allow the discussion to expand for a longer block. This activity works best with a whole class, whether in the classroom or using synchronous video instruction in distance learning.

How can I set up my class for discussion about dilemmas?

Dilemma discussions surface disagreements, which provide important learning opportunities but also can trigger discomfort. It's valuable to know that you aren't looking for "right" or "wrong" answers. While acknowledging that no set of norms will keep the conversation safe 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 alert that they might feel understandably vulnerable in their stance. It can also be challenging if a student feels personally attacked by other students' perspectives. Think about your classroom climate and your student group when deciding how to modify the routine and/or which dilemmas to cover. If you're looking for more support, check out:

- **Courageous Conversations**, Cult of Pedagogy
- **Contracting**, Facing History and Ourselves

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How do you facilitate this activity?

First, **choose a digital dilemma** that you want students to analyze. Be sure to read the **Keys for Using Dilemmas** to incorporate these strategies into the lesson. Make a copy of the **Take a Stand** handout. Copy and paste the dilemma and the "complicated questions" into the worksheet. Use the teacher guidance below, which mirrors the sections in the student handout, to support students through each step of the thinking routine. Note that some steps are done individually and others are done as a class.

(Insert dilemma name here.)
(Insert dilemma here.)

Take a Stand
On your own: What do you think? Explain your perspective. On their own, have students reflect on their personal perspectives. They could take one minute to think, and three to four minutes to write their responses on the handout. You can provide anchors to help students start their responses, such as a line from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree where students mark their position along the continuum. Encourage students to consider the benefits and privacy risks of facial recognition they discussed in the previous activity. The aim of this step is to support students' immediate reaction, thinking, and reflection—no need for them to write out a full paragraph or complete sentences. Getting down thoughts in the form of bullet points or keywords works.

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Stand Back

As a group: Where do your classmates stand? Listen to their perspectives.

As a group, first get a sense of where students stand. You can either have students:

- Give a thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumbs sideways to signal whether they agree, disagree, or are undecided, or
- Get up and position themselves physically to show where they stand. Assign each corner of the room to one of these positions, or form a line along one wall. It's helpful to have signs to remind students where to go—e.g., for "Strongly Agree" vs. "Strongly Disagree."

Invite students to share their perspectives. Try to hear from students who have different perspectives. As students share their views, document themes from their responses on the board. For example, if a student shares "it could help," you might write "helpful." If a student shares "it can be risky," you could write "risk." Your aim as a facilitator is to help surface as many different considerations as possible.

Encourage students to show changes in their thinking. As students listen to their classmates' perspectives, their own stance on the dilemma may shift. If students have physically located themselves on a line or in different corners of the room to show where they stand, invite them to shift their location to represent any changes in their thinking.

Look Again

On your own: Look again at your original response. What had you *not* considered that other people brought up? Maybe you changed your mind, maybe you didn't—that's OK! Either way, you heard other views. How has your thinking shifted after hearing your classmates' perspectives, even if you haven't changed your mind?

On their own, have students look again at their original response and identify what they had not considered. The "Look Again" step is *not* about asking students, "Did you change your mind?" Rather, the idea is to help them identify ways their thinking has changed based on what they learned and heard. It's powerful to recognize that our perspectives can evolve, deepen, or change when we listen to others. Students don't need to identify considerations that are opposite their perspectives. Perhaps someone had the same general view as them (agree/disagree) but raised a consideration they hadn't thought of, which is fine to include here.

Students can use sentence starters for guidance:

- I had not considered ...
- My perspective did/did not change because ...

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As a group: Look beyond this specific case. How does this dilemma remind you of other situations we've explored in class or that you've seen, heard about, or experienced?

Students make connections to situations or experiences beyond this specific dilemma. Ask:
- How does the dilemma connect to other things we've talked about in our class?
- How does the dilemma connect to other situations you've seen, heard about, or experienced?

Your aim is to support students in recognizing connections and applying considerations beyond the current abstract situation. An additional aim is to encourage the disposition to seek facts and evidence, either at a surface level (naming real-world cases) or in a deeper way (inviting students to investigate the facts associated with real-world cases, relevant legal and ethical questions, etc.)

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<tr><td style="background-color:purple;color:white;text-align:center;">Complicate (optional)</td></tr>
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Discuss these questions in your group, and share responses. Be sure to hear all perspectives—the more perspectives, the better!

(This section is optional. You can discuss the "complicated questions" as a class or insert select questions here to have students discuss in pairs or in groups, or respond individually.)

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Which dilemmas can you use with Take a Stand?

Use any of the following dilemmas with students. You can copy and paste the dilemma and complicate questions into the Take a Stand handout.

1. **"The Protest"**: At a protest, people were chanting and rallying to express hate for another group of people. Someone later gathered pictures from the protest and started sharing them on social media, asking people for help identifying the protesters. Once protestors were identified, people publicly shamed them for their hateful views and pressured their employers to fire them. *Do you agree with the practice of calling out the protestors' identities online? Why, or why not?*

   Thinking Routine
   Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond.

Complicate questions

→ Does it make a difference what the protesters' jobs are? What if the protester was a teacher versus a truck driver?

→ What if the protester were a teen? Should they face lifelong consequences?

→ What if you (students) were in the picture, either because you were participating in the protest or just standing nearby, observing it? What if I (teacher) were at the protest and in one of the pictures?

→ What if the people on Twitter identified the protesters but didn't take the extra step of trying to get their employers involved?

→ What if the protesters were rallying to support stricter gun control laws? Or to advocate gun ownership rights?

→ Is free speech "protected" if protesters face consequences?

2. **"Streaming Fights Online":** The school day had just ended, and Aruv was storming through the halls looking for Drew. During the last period, a classmate told Aruv something rude Drew had said about Aruv's sister, and Aruv was ready to fight him. Indira pulled out her phone and started following Aruv, recording him as he searched through the halls on his hunt for Drew. She was sharing live, and there was already a growing audience watching online, egging Aruv on. When Aruv found Drew, they started fighting and a large crowd gathered in person. All around them, people stood behind their phones, recording the scene. Eventually, a teacher realized what was going on and broke up the fight. Over the next few days, the school investigated what happened and decided to suspend both Aruv and Indira. *Was it OK for people to record and stream or post the fight? Why, or why not? Do you think that Indira deserved consequences, as well as Aruv? Why, or why not?*

    Thinking Routine

    Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: **Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond**.

    Complicate questions

    → What might be Indira's motivation for recording the fight? Does it matter?

    → What if Indira just wanted the video to go viral so she would get famous?

    → What if Indira said she was scared of Aruv and didn't know what else to do since there were no adults around?

    → Are there situations when recording violence can be helpful?

    → Are there situations when recording violence can be harmful or make the situation worse?

→ What if there were one student recording the fight versus 20 students recording the fight?

3. **"College Admissions"**: Alex was recently accepted to a prestigious college and joined a private online group made up of other accepted students. In the group, students were exchanging inappropriate jokes. Some jokes were hateful toward certain groups of people. Alex was taken aback by what the other students were sharing, but also unsure of what college would be like and anxious to make new friends. After reading some of the other students' posts, Alex contributed a joke that mocked a minoritized group. A few weeks later, the college's admissions team learned about the online group and decided to take back admissions offers from students who contributed hateful content, including Alex. Alex was no longer welcome to attend the university. *Do you agree with the college's decision to take back Alex's admissions offer? Why, or why not?*

   Thinking Routine
   Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: **Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond**.

   Complicate questions
   → What if Alex was a member of the minoritized group that he mocked?
   → What if the joke were shared in a private text rather than in an online group?
   → What if Alex "liked" a post that mocked the minority group, but didn't post it himself?
   → What if it were too late to apply to any other college and all the students would be forced to take a gap year?
   → What if Alex were a middle schooler and it was a special high school he had been accepted to, rather than a college?

   (This dilemma is from **The Consequences of Online Hate Speech** lesson for 12th grade.)

4. **"Photo Evidence"**: Sarah had strong feelings about politics and they had gotten even stronger over the last year. She was in a group chat with some other kids from her grade who were also into politics, and they often texted or traded memes about different political issues. Sarah mostly enjoyed the chat, though there was one person in particular, Julian, whose political opinions always conflicted with hers and felt borderline offensive. Julian was also the captain of the basketball team. One day, Julian crossed the line, posting a pic of himself smiling in front of a [racist symbol/swastika]. Outraged, Sarah saved the photo to her phone and weighed her options. When she tried confronting Julian directly, he told her to get over it. She debated sending the incriminating photo to the principal or his coach. *Would you agree with the decision to show the photo to the principal or coach? Why, or why not?*

Thinking Routine
Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: **Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond**.

Complicate questions
→ What if Julian had done this kind of thing before versus it being the first time?
→ What if Julian were [Black/Jewish]?
→ What if Sarah and Julian had dated and recently broken up?
→ Imagine that Sarah doesn't send the picture. Thirty years go by and Julian is running for political office. Should Sarah release the photo? What if, instead of running for office, he is the vice principal of a school? What if he's just a regular community member?

5. **"Violent Videos"**: Monica was actively involved in civic issues at her high school and in her town. She also followed a number of activist accounts on Instagram and Twitter. She was especially concerned about racial profiling by police officers. When a video of a violent interaction between a police officer and a young Black teenager surfaced on Twitter, Monica debated whether or not to share the video across her social media pages. She wanted to use every tool she could to raise awareness and show people how bad she thought this problem had gotten. At the same time, her younger cousins and some of the campers from when she was a camp counselor all followed her on social media and would see whatever she shared. Monica watched the video again: There was no doubt that it was incredibly graphic and scary. She hit "share" and waited for people to respond. *Do you agree with the decision to share the violent video footage online? Why, or why not?*

Thinking Routine
Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: **Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond**.

Complicate questions
→ What if Monica knew for sure that her younger campers would see the video and be scared or harmed by it?
→ What if the video featured someone dying?
→ Does Monica's motivation for sharing the video matter? What if Monica thought sharing the video would help bring justice?
→ What if Monica shared the video on the public social media account of the social justice group she led at her school?

→ What if, instead of posting a video, Monica made flyers with an image from the video and posted them all over her town?

6. **"Social Distance?"**: As the coronavirus pandemic unfolded, people across the country and world were encouraged to stay at home and practice social distancing. Although they were low-key concerned about the virus, Kaden and his friends were psyched when their school shut down for three weeks. On the second day school was closed, they all slept in until noon and then met up at the park. They recorded a TikTok together. In the video, they were laughing, high-fiving, and eating pizza. When Tali, Kaden's classmate, saw the video with tons of likes and supportive comments, she was pretty surprised. She was also worried about the message Kaden, one of the most popular kids in her grade, was sending to her peers and his wider audience of teens on TikTok. *Was it OK for Kaden to share his TikTok? Does Tali have a responsibility to do anything?*

Thinking Routine
Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: **Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond**.

Complicate questions
→ What if the video were actually recorded before the coronavirus pandemic?
→ What if they were clearly violating shelter-in-place rules when they recorded the video?
→ What if they didn't actually high-five or share food, but were just hanging out together and not social distancing?
→ What if Kaden was Tali's younger brother instead of her classmate?

7. **"Lunch Lines"**: Dr. Davis is the principal of Fairview High School, one of the biggest schools in the state. At the beginning of the year, Dr. Davis sent around a survey to learn about the things students wanted to improve about their school. Most students said they wanted to make the lunch lines more efficient so that everyone could eat without having to rush to make it to their next class. While looking for solutions to the issue of lunch lines, Dr. Davis received a pitch from a facial recognition company. The company said it could create a system that allows students to pay for their lunch using their faces. That way, students would not have to wait in long lines to get their lunch and then pay for it. *Do you think Dr. Davis should get facial recognition technology to improve the lunch lines?*

Thinking Routine
Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: **Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond**.

Complicate questions
→ Does it make a difference where the technology is installed (hallway vs. cafeteria)?
→ What if the school administrators also have access to facial recognition information?

→ Would it make a difference if this technology were already in use in a place like a grocery store?
→ What if the facial recognition company were owned by another company, like Facebook?
→ What facial recognition company shared data with police and law enforcement?

(This dilemma is in the **Risk Check for New Tech** lesson for 10th grade.)

8. **"New in Town"**: Tavis, who is 10 years old, recently moved to a new town in a different state for his dad's work. At his new school, he feels like everyone stares at him, and some people even seem to whisper as he walks by. He's lonely, doesn't feel like he fits in, and wishes he could go back to his old friends and school. His parents just got him his first phone but made it very clear that he should only use it to text and call them or other family members. One day Tavis was feeling so lonely that he decided to join social media to see if he could find old friends there. He also started posting videos, including some where he talks about how he feels like an outcast in his new school. *Do you think it's OK, or not OK, that Tavis joined social media?*

Thinking Routine
Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: **Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond**.

Complicate questions
→ Would it be different if Tavis's parents had given him permission to join social media sites?
→ What if Tavis makes new online friends who are supportive, but spends less time face-to-face with potential new friends at school?
→ If Tavis is going to use social media, are there any things he or his parents should do?

(This dilemma is in How **Young Is Too Young for Social Media?** lesson for 11th grade.)

9. **"Whose Fake News"**: John makes his living by hosting several fake news sites. The names of the sites look and sound legitimate, but they're completely made up and filled with untrue stories written just to get people to click on them. He buys ad space on other sites and places the stories as clickbait. Every time someone clicks on one of his stories, he earns money in advertising revenue. Some of his headlines have been shared millions of times on social media and have gotten even more in clicks and impressions. *Does John have the right to make money spreading false information, or should he have a responsibility to be accurate and not spread disinformation?*

Thinking Routine

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Have students use the Take a Stand thinking routine and handout: **Take a Stand → Stand Back → Look Again → Look Beyond**.

Complicate Questions
→ What if the revenue from the fake news site was being used to support a worthy social cause or charity?
→ What if John's popular false articles help change public opinion on a topic?
→ Should the websites or platforms that place John's stories as ads be held accountable for helping spread disinformation?

(This dilemma is in the **Clicks for Cash** lesson for 11th grade.)

What lessons include Take a Stand?

Take a Stand is included as the core activity in the following lessons from the **Digital Citizenship Curriculum**:

- Grade 7: **The Power of Digital Footprints**
- Grade 10: **Risk Check for New Tech**
- Grade 11: **How Young Is Too Young for Social Media?**
- Grade 11: **Clicks for Cash**
- Grade 12: **The Consequences of Online Hate Speech**