

8 to 1

A routine for capturing the essence of learning

1. If you were to write exactly 8 words that captured the heart of what should be remembered, what would those 8 words be?
2. Now that you have your 8, can you distil them down to 4?
3. And 2?
4. And 1?
5. Reflect: Share your 8 words, your 4 words, your 2 words and your 1 word. How did your thinking change? What did you learn about what's most important here?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine encourages students to capture the heart of the content being studied. It also helps them to reflect on the process of essence capturing, and how decisions are made about what is most important.

Application: When and where can it be used?

- This routine works best when students have explored a complex and multi-faceted topic and now seek to make sense out of many different ideas.
- The routine supports the process of conclusion drawing, as it encourages students to consider everything in the big picture before drilling down into a single, underpinning idea.
- The routine can be used quite effectively with Chalk Talk. At the end of a Chalk Talk, students are often confronted with a number of big questions on butcher's paper around which there are a plethora of scribbles and interactions, which can sometimes feel overwhelming. 8 to 1 supports students in capturing the essence of Chalk Talk discussions.

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

- The first time you run the routine, you may wish to model how students might capture the essence of their thinking in 8 words, by selecting a different learning area and modelling your own process of thinking.
- On the first use of this routine you might choose not to tell them they will be required to distil down to 4, 2 and 1 – this surprise is often challenging and energizing.
- The routine works well when students are asked *individually* to compose their 8 words, 4 words, 2 words and 1 word, prior to sharing their thinking during the reflection phase.
- There is a particular challenge to capturing thinking and learning in *exactly* 8 words. If students ask whether 9 words is OK, you might wish to encourage them to keep trying! The same applies to 4, 2 and 1.
- For 8 words, encourage students to come up with something similar to a complete sentence. The routine is not so powerful when students simply generate a list of 8 associated but disconnected words. You may wish to press them to come up with a standalone 'utterance' which makes sense in and of itself. Similarly, avoid listing for 4 words and 2 words. The 4 words might be a phrase; the 2 words might be an adjective and a noun, or a verb and an adverb, etc.
- As students drill down into 4, 2 and 1, let them know that although they are likely to retain words from their original 8, they can also introduce new words that might help them capture the essence of their thinking more succinctly.
- Finally, in the REFLECT phase, encourage students to share all four iterations of their thinking with one another (you might deploy think-pair-share here). Ask them to talk through how and why they made the decisions that they did, how their thinking changed as they went along, and what now seems most important to them in this area of learning.