

8 to 1

A routine for capturing the essence of learning

Think of the big ideas and important themes in what you have just read, seen or heard.

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. Share your 8 words, 4 words, 2 words and 1 word with a partner or the group. Why did you make these choices? Which words did it hurt the most to lose? What have you learned about what's most important here?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine invites students to capture the heart of the ideas they are exploring. It helps them 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?

- The routine works well when students have explored a complex, multi-faceted topic and now seek to make sense of their thinking and understandings.
- 8 to 1 might also be paired with the Chalk Talk thinking routine, as a way of having students get to the heart of what is important in each of the individual Chalk Talk discussions or the entire Chalk Talk.

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

- Be strict on the numbers! There is a particular challenge to capturing thinking and learning in *exactly* 8 words. If students ask whether 9 words is OK, encourage them to keep trying! The same applies to 4, 2 and 1.
- For 8 words, encourage students to come up with a complete sentence rather than a list of 8. Similarly, avoid listing for 4 words and 2 words. The routine is not usually so powerful when students simply generate a list of 8 associated but disconnected words. The words should hang together in some way in a short sentence or phrase.
- 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 may also introduce new words if they wish.
- In the final sharing and discussion phase, press for as much explanation and justification as possible. The learning is in the thinking and the talking. You might set up a gallery walk so they are able to view and reflect on each other's 8 to 1s. Ask them to share 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 about this area of learning having been through the entire process of 8 to 1.