



# VISIBLE THINKING ROUTINES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

EAQUALS Conference 2021  
Alex Warren  
National Geographic Learning



# Agenda

What are visible thinking routines?

Why should we use them in the language classroom?

How can I utilise them?

“21<sup>st</sup> century education is about giving students a set of skills, abilities and knowledge they need to develop in order to succeed in learning, work and life in the information age.”

<http://21stcenturyskillsbook.com/blog/q-a/>



## The world of work

### GOALS

- Understand cause and effect in an article
- Use the present perfect to talk about unfinished time
- Talk about jobs
- Use mind maps to help understand an interview
- Give a good impression at a job interview
- Write a CV

### 1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- 1 Look at the photo. Describe what you see.
- 2 Do you know anyone who does a similar job?
- 3 What are the best and most difficult things about your job/studies?

### WATCH

### 2 WATCH the video. Answer the questions.

#### NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORERS



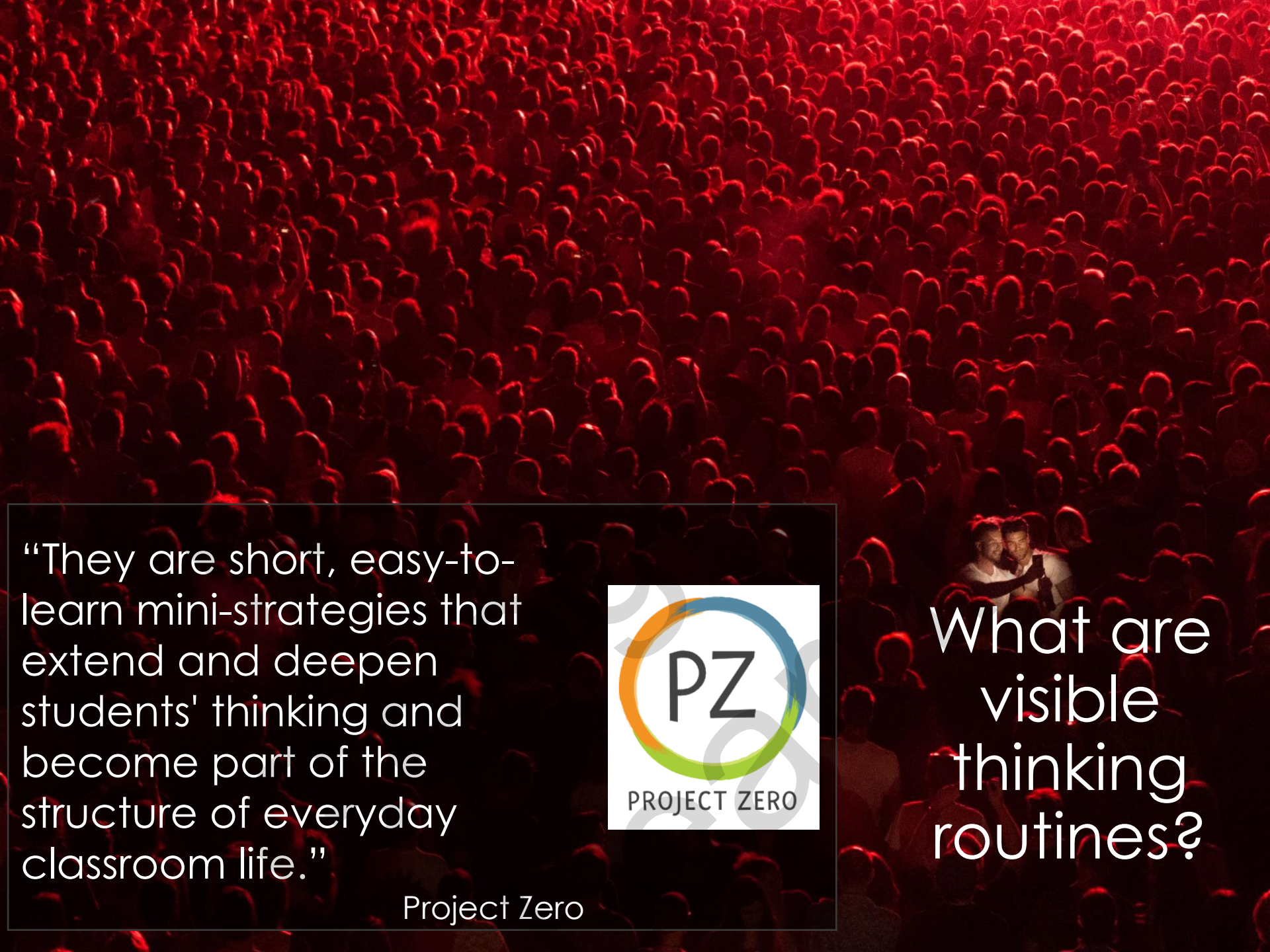
RUBEN SALGADO ESCUDERO ANNE JUNGBLUT

- 1 What do Ruben and Anne do?
- 2 What has been their favourite project at work?
- 3 What world problems do they want to tell people about?

### 3 Make connections. What do you have in common with Ruben and Anne? How are you different?

*Anne is interested in the environment, so am I.  
Ruben travels a lot for work, but I don't travel for work.*





“They are short, easy-to-learn mini-strategies that extend and deepen students' thinking and become part of the structure of everyday classroom life.”

Project Zero

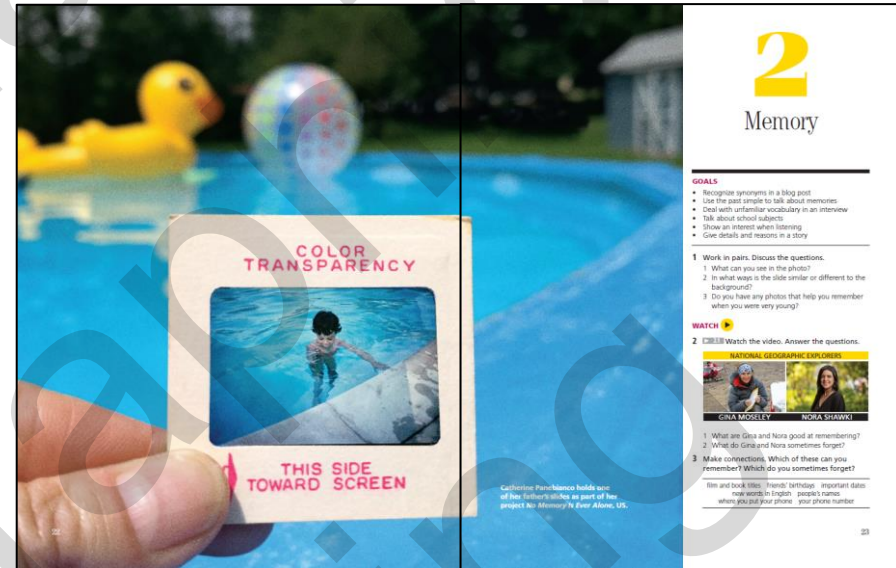


What are  
visible  
thinking  
routines?

# Thinking Dispositions

Ritchart et al, 2011

1. Observing closely & describing
2. Building explanations & interpretations
3. Reasoning with evidence
4. Making connections
5. Considering different viewpoints & perspectives
6. Capturing the heart & forming conclusions
7. Wondering & asking questions
8. Going below the surface of things





# Visible Thinking Routines

CORE THINKING ROUTINES

POSSIBILITIES & ANALOGIES

PERSPECTIVES, CONTROVERSIES & DILEMMAS

OBJECTS & SYSTEMS

PERSPECTIVE TAKING

WITH ART OR OBJECTS

DIGGING DEEPER INTO IDEAS

SYNTHESIZING & EXPLORING IDEAS

INTRODUCING & EXPLORING IDEAS

<https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

The background of the image is a dense crowd of people, mostly seen from behind, filling the frame. The entire scene is bathed in a strong red light, creating a monochromatic effect. In the lower right portion of the image, there is a large, semi-transparent white circle. Inside this circle, the text "Why should we incorporate thinking routines into our lessons?" is written in a black, sans-serif font. The word "thinking" is underlined. A faint, large watermark of the word "Paradise" is visible across the middle of the image, partially obscured by the white circle.

Why should we  
incorporate  
thinking routines  
into our lessons?




“Learning is the outcome of thinking, and as such gaining insights into the ways students think is crucial for teachers, allowing them to alter students’ thinking dispositions.”

Caroti, Howell, Kester,  
Dodgson, 2017



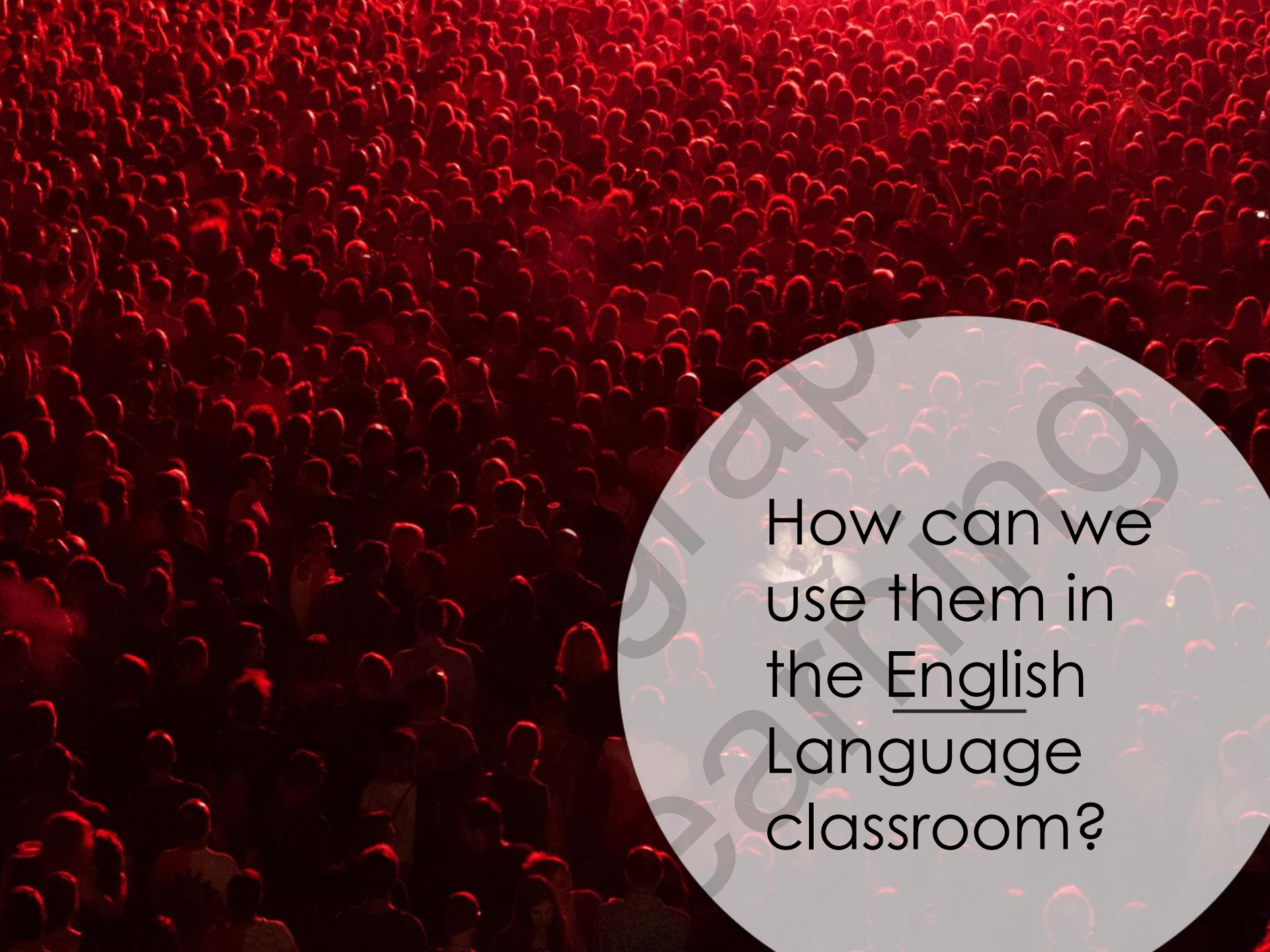
- Development of learners' thinking and learning abilities
- Deeper understanding of content
- Greater motivation for learning
- Development of learners' attitudes to learning
- A shift in classroom culture towards more enthusiastically engaged thinkers and learners
- Facilitates a more inclusive and communicative classroom



“Learning is a consequence of thinking, not something extra we tack on for good measure but something in which we must actively engage to promote our own and others’ learning.”

Ron Ritchhart, *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, 2015



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How can we  
use them in  
the English  
Language  
classroom?



# 7

## Balance

### GOALS

- Identify supporting reasons in an advice column
- Talk about the future
- Talk about managing money
- Identify supporting information in a podcast
- Deal with different ways of processing information
- Write a pros and cons essay

### 1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- 1 Look at the photo. Where is the person in the photo?
- 2 What is he doing? How do you think he feels?

### WATCH

### 2 Watch the video. Answer the questions.

#### NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORERS



FRANCISCO  
ESTRADA-BELLI

REBECCA WOLFF

- 1 Why do Francisco and Rebecca feel it can be hard to achieve balance in their lives?
- 2 What do they do to try and achieve that balance?
- 3 Why does Rebecca think it's important to create time for yourself?

### 3 Make connections. Discuss the questions.


- 1 In what areas of your life do you try to achieve a balance?
- 2 How do you try to achieve this balance?
- 3 Do you have any tips for achieving balance you can share?

I see...  
I think...  
I wonder...



# The 3 Whys

1. Why might this [topic, question] matter to me?
2. Why might it matter to people around me [family, friends, city, nation]?
3. Why might it matter to the world?



**1 Identity**

**GOALS**

- Preview an article before reading
- Describe photos and different identities
- Practice using adjectives to describe character
- Understand sequence
- Understand different communication styles
- Write an online self-introduction

**1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.**

- 1 Look at the photo. Can you describe this place?
- 2 Can you describe the woman in the photo? What kind of person do you think she is?
- 3 How do you think she feels about her job? Why do you think so?


**WATCH**

2 **CRITICAL THINKING SKILL** Watch the video. Answer the questions.

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORER**

**BRUNN LIMA**

- 1 What kind of person does Brian say he was as a child?
- 2 What were his things different for Brian now?
- 3 Make connections. Discuss the questions.
  - 1 What kind of things did you enjoy doing when you were a child?
  - 2 Do you still enjoy doing the same things now?
  - 3 What did you do as a child that you would like to start doing again?



**One true online identity?**

**READING**

- 1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.
  - 1 Do you use social media?
  - 2 Which social media platforms do you use?
  - 3 Do you use different platforms or different accounts for different purposes?
- 2 Match the words in bold (1-4) with the correct meanings (a-d).
  - 1 Your online **profile** shows who you really are.
  - 2 Having **multiple** profiles on one social network is a bit strange.
  - 3 Most people have many different sides to their **personality**.
  - 4 People may have a different **identity** in different social situations.

a your picture, information about you, etc.  
b your character, the way you act and behave towards other people  
c the qualities that make you what you are and make you different from other people  
d many
- 3 Work in pairs. Do you agree or disagree with statements 1-4 in Exercise 2? Why?
- 4 Look at the Reading skill box. Preview the article on page 13 and answer the questions in the box.
 

**Previewing the text**

Before you read, look at the whole text to get an idea of what it's about. Look at the title and any images. Read the first sentence of each paragraph. Ask:

  - What's the main topic of the text?
  - What do I know about this topic?
  - What will I learn?
- 5 Read the article. Which three topics does it discuss?
  - 1 Social-media accounts and how people use them
  - 2 Problems with creating multiple identities online
  - 3 What people show different sides of themselves to different audiences online
  - 4 Similarities between online and offline behaviour
  - 5 The dangers of spending too much time online

**LESSON GOALS**

- Preview an article before reading
- Understand an article about online identities
- Answer questions

**6 Complete the sentences with two words from the article.**

- 1 Nicole Lee has a \_\_\_\_\_ on each of her social-media accounts.
- 2 Nicole \_\_\_\_\_ about someone who uses different identities online to connect with different audiences.
- 3 One letter user says that he leads different lives with his online contacts, friends and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4 Malloy Johns shows different parts of \_\_\_\_\_ by using different social-media accounts.
- 5 The fact that we have different identities for different aspects shows that we have \_\_\_\_\_ which makes us amazing.

**SPREADING**

7 Look at the Critical thinking skill box. In pairs, answer questions 1-3.

**CRITICAL THINKING SKILL**  
Evaluating arguments

Writers often argue that their point of view is true or correct. However, sometimes people support their ideas with incorrect or false information, or don't support them at all. Think carefully about whether or not to believe what you're reading and whether you agree with the idea. Ask:

- Is it a statement of fact or of opinion?
- Is the argument supported with evidence, such as:
  - specific examples or personal experience?
  - data such as statistics or the results of scientific research?
  - expert opinions?
- Do you know of any evidence that goes against the argument?

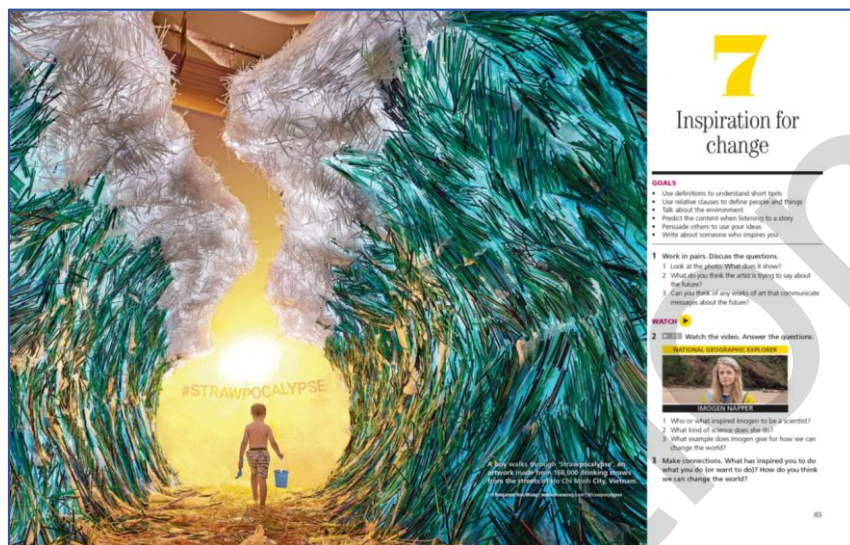
1 What types of evidence does the article use?

2 Mark Zuckerberg's statement is a fact or an opinion? How can you tell?

3 Which do you think makes a stronger argument - Mark Zuckerberg's name or the article's title?

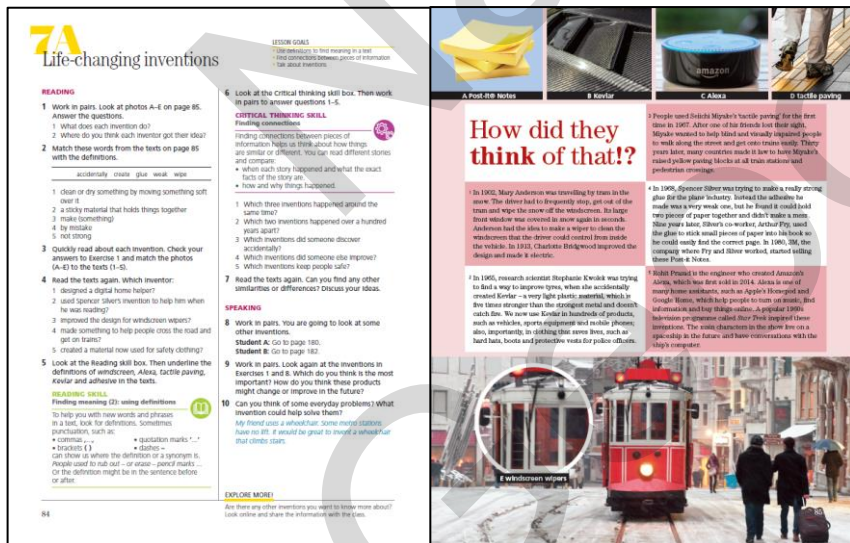
**EXPLORE MORE!**

Search online for 'how to build an online identity' for tips and ideas about creating and managing your online identity.



# Question Starts

Why...?  
What are the reasons...?  
What if...?  
What if we knew...?  
What would change if...?  
Suppose that...?  
How would X be different if...?  
What is the purpose of...?



Voices Pre-Intermediate





# Think, Puzzle, Explore

1. What do you think you know about this topic?
2. What questions or puzzles do you have?
3. What does the topic make you want to explore?

## 4A The power of daily routines

**READING**

- 1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.
  - 1 Do you have a routine you follow every day, or do you do things differently each day?
  - 2 Do you enjoy having a routine or do you find it boring?
- 2 Read the title of the article on page 49. In pairs, discuss these questions.
  - 1 How can a routine help you get through the day?
  - 2 What do you think is meant by 'the right routine'?
- 3 Read the article quickly. Write any of your ideas from Exercise 2 in the notes.
- 4 Read the article again. Match the beginnings of the sentences (1-5) with the endings (a-e).

**1** In an emergency situation, a routine may  
**2** For artists, a routine can  
**3** For working people, rushing through their morning routine may  
**4** In business, workers who choose their own routine  
**5** A personally chosen routine can

**a** lead to success.  
**b** block creative thought.  
**c** work longer hours.  
**d** save lives.  
**e** make you feel happier.

**5** Look at the Reading skill box. Underline one affix in each bold word (1-4) in the article.

**READING SKILL**  
**Finding meaning using affixes**  
Affixes are groups of letters added to the beginning or end of a word to change its meaning. When you read a new word, look to see if it has a prefix such as re- or -er- or a suffix such as -ous, -ive, -al or -ful. Then look for the word that the affix is attached to. **1**

**1** Does the affix change the part of speech?  
**2** Does the affix change the meaning?

**EXPLORE MORE!**  
Search online for 'positive morning routines' for more ideas on the best way to start the day.

**LESSON GOALS**

- understand the article about routines
- deal with new vocabulary affixes
- apply knowledge to a new situation

**6** Write the part of speech – N (noun), A (adjective) or V (verb) – for each word.

- 1 encouragement 5 creative
- 2 helpful 6 unnecessary
- 3 survival 7 useless
- 4 creativity 8 rethink

**7** Look again at the words in Exercise 6. In pairs, answer these questions.

- 1 Which three suffixes change a verb to a noun?
- 2 Which two suffixes change a verb to an adjective?
- 3 Which two suffixes change an adjective to a noun?
- 4 Which prefix means not?
- 5 Which prefix means do again?

**SPEAKING**

**8** Look at the Critical thinking skill box. In pairs, discuss situations 1-3.

**CRITICAL THINKING SKILL**  
**Applying knowledge to a new situation**  
Information is a collection of facts and ideas. Knowledge is the understanding that allows you to use this information in different situations. When you apply knowledge to a new situation, ask:  
• What have I learned about this topic?  
• How does that knowledge apply to the new situation?

**1** Students in school

- What does a typical school routine include?
- Do you think this routine improves creativity or reduces it? Why?

**2** A bored office worker

- What types of work might be boring for office workers?
- What kind of routine could they create to make work less boring?

**3** A person working alone from home

- What problems could arise because of a lack of routine?
- What sort of routine might help improve the quality of their work?

## Getting through the day

How the right routine can make your life better

People do their morning exercises in Shanghai, China.

**1** What does the word routine mean to you? For many of us, it may be an image of doing the same thing day after day – the boredom of repeating the same actions over and over again. However, the reality is that a carefully planned routine can support mental health, improve creativity and increase the quality of your work.

A routine can also bring a sense of order to daily life and provide a sense of purpose – we know where we are and what we have to do next. In 2010, 50 runners were trapped in a mine in Chile after part of the roof fell in. When they realised their way to get out, team leader Luis Urrutia set up a work and eating schedule for them. Experts agreed that Urrutia's **encouragement** to keep to a routine was a key factor in keeping the miners alive and well until their rescue – 69 days later.

But routines aren't just **helpful** for survival. Artists from painter J.M.W. Turner to author Agatha Christie have said that a work routine is the key to **creativity** and success. If you don't have to think constantly about what to do every day, your mind is free to think about big ideas.

However, when developing a routine, it's important to stick to the right sort of routine. Researchers in the US concluded that people who wake up to an alarm, quickly shower and eat and then rush off to work are missing out on the best **creative** thinking time of the day.

Researcher Joanne Murphy Paul writes that the best approach is to 'wake the brain a few minutes early and sit quietly in bed, letting your thoughts wander where they lead'. This gives your mind time and space to be creative when you aren't thinking about anything else or rushing to the next thing.

It would be **unnecessary**, though, for all of us to have the same routine – especially in the workplace. Simon Stuke, CEO of a digital marketing training company in New Zealand, says that his employees 'have complete control over their personal schedules'. He judges his employees not on the time they put in, but on the work they produce. 'This means the input of hours and how an employee organises their doesn't really matter to me, as long as they are continuing to improve and producing excellent work.' You might think this encourages **laziness**, but researchers in Germany found that workers who set their own schedule actually work more hours than those whose routine is set by the company.

While some routines may lead to boredom, a carefully – and personally – chosen one not only allows space for creativity and increases productivity, it can also increase confidence and happiness. So, ask yourself: is my daily routine working for me? If not, it may be time to **rethink** it.

Voices Intermediate

# Visible Thinking Routines Post-Reading/Topic







3-2-1

3 things I found interesting

2 things I'd like to know more about

1 thing I'd like to fact check

### 4A The power of daily routines

**LESSON GOALS**

- Understand the article about routines
- Deal with new vocabulary easily
- Apply knowledge to a new situation

**READING**

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  - Do you enjoy having a routine or do you find it boring?
- Read the title of the article on page 49. In pairs, discuss these questions.
  - How can a routine help you get through the day?
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- Read the article quickly. Write any of your ideas from Exercise 2 in the notes.
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- Do I know the root word?
- Does the affix change the part of speech?
- Does the affix change the meaning?

**EXPLORE MORE!**  
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### Getting through the day

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Voices Intermediate

# The 4Cs

## Connections

What connections do you draw between the text and your own life or your other learning?

## Challenge

What ideas, positions, or assumptions do you want to challenge or argue with in the text?

## Concepts

What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the text?

## Changes

What changes in attitudes, thinking, or action are suggested by the text, either for you or others?



**Getting through the day**  
How the right routine can make your life better

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Voices Intermediate



# Stop, Think, Discuss

What did I find most interesting?  
Why?

Did anything surprise/shock  
me? Why?

Did anything worry/concern  
me? Why?

Did anything make me stop  
and think? Why?

Was there anything I strongly  
agreed /disagreed with? Why?

Has my view/opinion changed  
from reading this? Why?



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# Text analyst

1. What is the real meaning and purpose of this text?
2. Is the author successful in this?
3. If so, how has the author achieved success? If not, how has the author failed or fallen short of their intent?

Dummett & Hughes, 2019

Voices Intermediate





## Getting through the day

How the right routine can make your life better

People do their morning exercise in Shanghai, China.

1 What does the word *routine* make you think of? For many of us, it may be an image of doing the same thing day after day – the boredom of repeating the same actions over and over again. However, the reality is that a carefully planned routine can support mental health, improve creativity and increase the quality of your work.

5 A routine can also bring a sense of order to daily life and provide a sense of place and purpose – we know where we are and what we have to do next. In 2010, 33 miners were trapped in a mine in Chile after part of the roof fell in. When they realized there was no way out, team leader Luis Urzúa set up a work and eating schedule for them. Experts agreed that Urzúa's 'encouragement to keep to a routine was a key factor in keeping the miners alive and well until their rescue – 69 days later.

10 But routines aren't just 'helpful' for 'survival'. Artists from painter Joan Miró to author Adele Parks have said that a work routine is the key to 'creativity and success. If you don't have to think constantly about what to do every day, your mind is free to think about big ideas.

15 However, when developing a routine, it's important to set up the right sort of routine. Researchers in the US concluded that people who wake up to an alarm, quickly shower and eat and then rush off to work are missing out on the best 'creative thinking time of the day.

Science journalist Anne Murphy Paul writes that the best approach is to 'set the alarm a few minutes early and lie awake in bed, following our thoughts where they lead'. This gives your mind time and space to be creative when you aren't thinking about anything else or rushing to the next thing.

20 It would be 'unnecessary, though, for all of us to have the same routine – especially in the workplace. Simon Slade, CEO of a digital marketing training company in New Zealand, says that his employees 'have complete control over their personal schedules'. He judges his employees not on the time they put in, but on the work they produce. 'This means the input of hours and how an employee organizes them doesn't really matter to me, as long as they are continuing to improve and producing excellent work.' You might think this encourages 'laziness, but researchers in Germany found that workers who set their own schedule actually work more hours than those whose routine is set by the company.

25 While some routines may lead to boredom, a carefully – and personally – chosen one not only allows space for creativity and increases productivity, it can also increase comfort and happiness. So, ask yourself: is my daily routine working for me? If not, it may be time to 'rethink it.

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I Used to Think...

Now I Think...

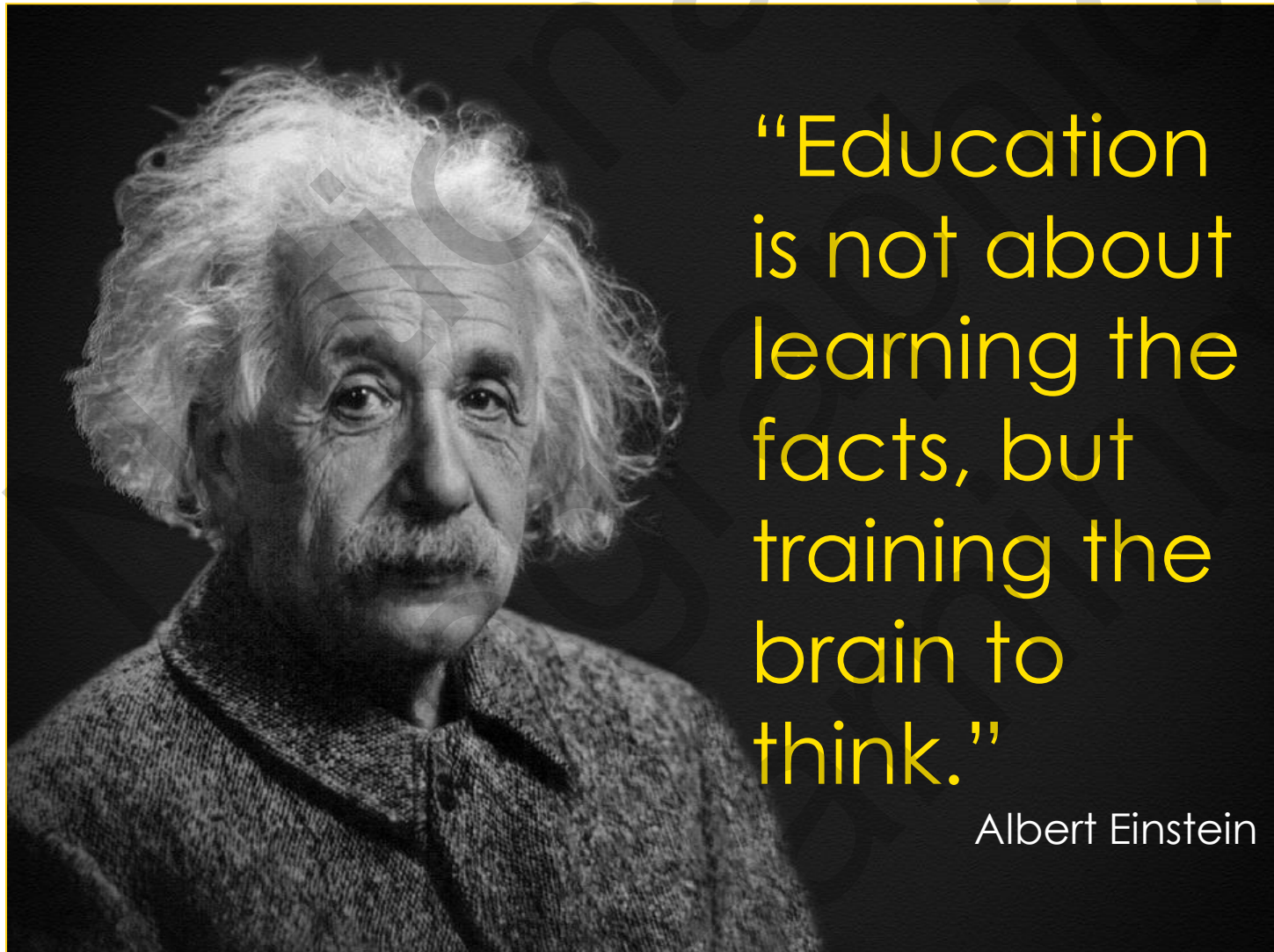
Voices Intermediate

# In Conclusion

Use visible thinking routines in the ELT classroom to:

- Develop deeper thinking and analysis
- Drive communication
- Make learning more personalised and meaningful





“Education  
is not about  
learning the  
facts, but  
training the  
brain to  
think.”

Albert Einstein



# Reflection...

I Used to Think...

Now I Think...



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