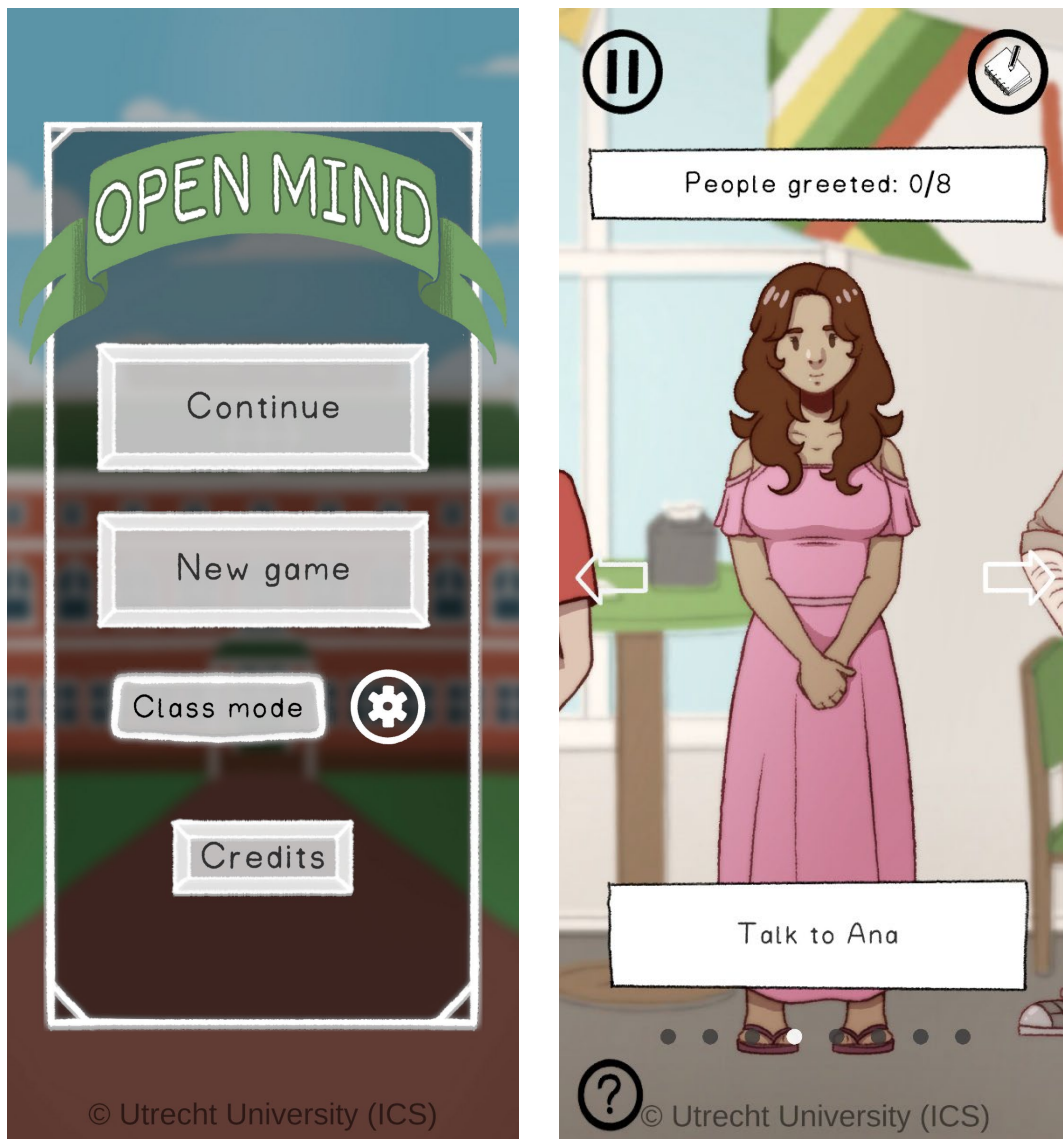


Open Mind

A digital game focused on perspective-taking

Teacher manual



Figuur 1. Illustrations in the game Open Mind.

Introduction

In a world increasingly marked by polarization, where meaningful dialogue often breaks down or turns into unproductive conflict, there is a growing need for educational tools and dialogues that foster perspective-taking. These tools should provide a unique opportunity to equip students with the skills to approach complex and pressing issues - such as vaccination rates, decolonization, and the use of AI - with empathy and openness, both inside and outside the university setting.

The digital game **Open Mind** offers a structured and engaging environment that challenges players' assumptions and encourages them to see the world from different perspectives. It allows them to reflect on their own experiences, question their assumptions, and explore diverse perspectives in a safe and interactive way. By presenting players with different characters with diverse characteristics, interests, and opinions, Open Mind creates an opportunity to start the development of vital skills students need to navigate today's diverse and interconnected world. Supporting students in developing these skills aligns with the new UU educational mission and vision, and the translation of the vision into the Graduate Attributes. These not only consist of academic knowledge and skills, but also pertain to personal development and socialization. For example: 'The graduate works across boundaries with an open attitude towards other disciplines and society'.

Open Mind is an educational tool functioning as a first introduction to perspective-taking and uncovering prejudices, priming students to be more open to participate in perspective-taking exercises and open dialogue. An introduction to perspective-taking can be complex, especially because creating a safe environment to explore and reflect on prejudices is important. With Open Mind, students can discover, try, and stumble in the safety of their own phone. The game was developed in collaboration with Computer Science bachelor students at Utrecht University during their final course 'Computer science software project'. To make sure that the characters in the game are not based on the development team's own prejudices, several people have been interviewed to create authentic characters.

This tool is one of three educational tools developed as part of the Comenius project 'Fostering an open mind and open attitude in higher education using games and art-based educational activities'. All materials were developed by teachers, educational innovators, and students from multiple faculties at Utrecht University, predominantly from the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, the Faculty of Medicine, and the Faculty of Humanities. The other tools consist of the game design toolkit 'Playing Perspectives' and the conversational format 'The Square'. These tools are a suitable next step after playing Open Mind.

This manual is intended for teachers who are considering using Open Mind in their education and would like to know more about this digital game.

Overview of Open Mind

Short description	Digital game to support participants in recognizing their prejudices and developing their perspective-taking skills by having conversations with various characters with diverse characteristics.
Duration	20-30 min (ex. introduction and reflection) 45 min (incl. introduction and reflection)
Min # participants	1
Max # participants	n.v.t.
Related themes	Perspective-taking, game-based learning, assumptions, bias, empathy
Skills	Exploring diverse perspectives, recognizing prejudices, critical thinking, developing empathy, being open to other insights
Learning goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students can recognize that different people perceive reality in different ways; 2. Students explore their own frame of reference with respect to other perspectives; 3. Students can explain what it means to have different perspectives; 4. Students can recognize that a person's perspective and underlying motivations may or may not be based on one's knowledge, interests, experiences, and culture; 5. Students can understand that a person has their own thoughts, feelings, and perspectives, which may differ from those of the person and others; 6. Students can identify their prejudices that influence their impression and judgement of others and others' perspectives; 7. Students can compare their deduced conclusion about a person to (the conclusions of a fellow student and) the person's true characteristics and perspectives.
Preparation student	Download app (only available for Android smartphone/tablet): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bGwwq2zTEiRnLLcG_PhXgU8eCwCjIDIN/view?usp=drive_link
Preparation teacher	If applicable: share generated class code, reserve classroom (see Version 2 – game play in class))
Required material	Digital Android device (for example, smartphone or tablet)
Advice regarding implementation in course/curriculum	<p>Suitable for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tutor/mentor meetings and introductory activities focused on perspectives, prejudices, diversity and inclusion; - Large groups of students; - As a primer prior to a dialogue on perspectives, prejudices, (bio)ethics, science & society.
Questions?	Robin Bos, MSc r.c.bos-8@umcutrecht.nl

Implementing Open Mind

The digital game can be implemented in courses, tutorship meetings, introductory activities, and other settings where one wishes to support participants' in recognizing potential prejudices and starting to develop their perspective-taking skills in a safe, non-intrusive way. Suitable courses or activities could include the aim of wanting 1) students to explore their own perspectives and recognize that one's perspectives may differ from those of others, 2) to use an accessible and playful tool to prime students before diving into topics related to ethics and science & society, or 3) students to take some time to practice recognizing their prejudices prior to discussing diversity & inclusion related cases. The game can also be used to have students in a cohort or tutor group practice their perspective-taking skills before getting to know each other. The game can also be used to have students in a cohort or tutor group practice their perspective-taking skills before getting to know each other. We recommend, the Open Mind game to be implemented before encouraging students to interact with different perspectives in a classroom situation.

The game consists of three major parts: the prologue, the game cycle, and the epilogue. During the **(1) prologue**, the player is introduced to the theme of perspective-taking. The player is given two small assignments to experience how different people may perceive the world in different ways. After completing the prologue, the player selects one of three stories: The Mysterious Contact, The Psychic Sidekick, or The Lost Paper. Next, the **(2) game cycle** starts, and the player is shown an introduction to the story and the purpose of the game. The player is then presented with an overview of the characters in the game cycle, and they get to choose who they wish to talk to. By asking question about the characters' interests, ideas, and opinions, the player gathers information to select the correct "culprit" at the end of the game cycle. Additionally, after each round of questioning one of the characters disappears and the player receives a hint about the culprit. Finally, the player confronts their chosen culprit during the **(3) epilogue**, and they reflect on their (in)correct choices and potential prejudices.

Playing Open Mind takes about 20-30 minutes. One can choose to have students play the game in class in class mode (version 1) and include a plenary introduction and a post-play reflection, or one can have students play the game (version 2) individually at home or somewhere else. You can find a brief description of both versions below. We recommend to always include a post-play reflection of 15-20 min to start a conversation about prejudice, bias, perspectives, and empathy, and reflect on students' experiences and opinions (see 'What to do after Open Mind?').

“The game is essentially doing exactly what is wrong. Forming assumptions and basing a deduction on them is obviously wrong. By making you do this, you realize for yourself that what you are doing is wrong. So, the core gameplay loop was very educational” – student about Open Mind

Version 1 – class mode

While playing the game, each player has access to a digital personal notebook in the game. When opting for the class mode, the players' notebooks are randomly exchanged between players. This creates the opportunity for each player to review another player's notes, compare those notes to their own, and use the new information substantiate their choice of who the culprit is. All players will receive a random notebook from one of the other players. Only the first player to reach the 'notebook exchange' must wait for another player to reach that point in the game, otherwise there is no notebook available for an exchange.

A teacher/host starts the class mode by opening the app, selecting 'Class mode' and 'Host Game'. Here, the host can select the maximum number of players allowed to enter the game. They generate a class code by selecting 'Create Game' and choosing one of three stories. Participants then use this class code to start the game after selecting 'Join Game'. Important: the class mode can only be used when all participants are connected to the same network. When using the app at the university, we recommend all participants to connect to Eduroam.

Time	Teacher instructions	Student activities	Materials
5 min	<p>Short introduction</p> <p>Explain why students play the game in the context of the course</p> <p>Access the game: open the app, select 'Class mode', 'Host Game', max number of players, and 'Create Game' to generate a class code</p> <p>Explain that students have access to an in-game notebook to write down their thoughts and that, at a certain point, they get access to the notebook of another student to compare notes</p> <p>Make sure all students have access to the game</p>	Access the game	Smartphone or tablet
25 min	<p>If needed: answer students' questions</p> <p>Time management</p>	Play the game	Smartphone or tablet
15 min	Facilitate reflection exercise (see 'What to do after Open Mind?')	Work on group assignment or participate in plenary reflection	Handout with reflection questions

Version 2 – individual game play

Students can also play Open Mind individually at the university or from home/at another location. Give a short introduction about the game and explain why students play the game in the context of the course; you can give the introduction at the end of a lecture or post the introduction in the syllabus. When playing the game individually, each player has access to a digital personal notebook. The player can use their personal notes to substantiate their choices. Individual game play does not require a class code. During the game, the player can save their progress and continue playing at any time by selecting ‘Load game’.

Each player can adjust the audio and accessibility settings to their preference (e.g., larger font, slower text speed, higher music volume).

Time	Teacher instructions	Student activities	Materials
5 min	<p>Short introduction in person or posted in the syllabus</p> <p>Explain why students play the game in the context of the course</p> <p>Make sure all students have access to the game</p>	Access the game	Smartphone or tablet
20-30 min		Play the game at home/another location	Smartphone or tablet
15 min	Facilitate reflection exercise (see ‘What to do after Open Mind?’)	Work on group assignment or participate in plenary reflection	Handout with reflection questions

What to do after Open Mind?

After students have played Open Mind, their experiences and insights provide valuable opportunities to further integrate those into the students' learning process. Below you will find suggestions for a reflection assignment, including reflection questions, and follow-up activities to carry out after the game play. We strongly recommend creating a moment after playing the game to reflect with students on their experiences, ideas, and opinions. Even when students have played the game individually at another location (version 2), we recommend teachers to include this reflection assignment in the next on-site session.

1. Reflecting on the gaming experience

Following the game play, you can have students reflect on the insights and experiences they have gained while playing the game. You can either 1) have students reflect on their insights and experiences in a team of three to four students in the form of a written assignment, video (report) or a creative work form (for example a drawing, script, animation, or artwork), or 2) facilitate a plenary reflection in class. Emphasize the importance of open communication and joint decision-making. When opting for a group assignment, encourage students to convert their experience into a group product. Have each group assign tasks/roles and instruct them to draw up a project plan they all agree with. They then implement their plan.

The following questions can serve as a starting point for reflection:

Reflection question	Corresponding learning aim
What perspectives or characteristics were shared by character you could not identify with? Did these characters have other characteristics you could identify with?	1. Students can recognize that different people perceive reality in different ways 5. Students can understand that a person has their own thoughts, feelings, and perspectives, which may differ from those of the person and others
Did getting to know the characters' ideas and characteristics change your first impression of them? How?	3. Students can explain what it means to have different perspectives
How did this activity change your perspective on your own perspective-taking skills and ability to recognize your prejudices?	4. Students can recognize that a person's perspective and underlying motivations may or may not be based on one's knowledge, interests, experiences, and culture

	6. Students can identify their prejudices that influence their impression and judgement of others and others' perspectives
What did you learn from playing the game and reflecting on your experience with your group?	2. Students explore their own frame of reference with respect to other perspectives 7. Students can compare their deduced conclusion about a person to (the conclusions of a fellow student and) the person's true characteristics and perspectives

General questions:

- What was the most valuable experience for you while playing Open Mind?
- What insights did you gain?
- Were there any moments in the game that made you feel uncomfortable or challenged in any way?
- How can you use what you have learned in this game in this or other courses, your personal life or future career?

2. Structurally integrate perspective-taking skills

After playing the game as an introduction to perspective-taking and uncovering prejudices, teachers might consider taking the next step. You can increase the effect of the Open Mind game by implementing the game design toolkit 'Playing Perspectives', the conversational form 'The Square', and/or other educational materials focused on perspective-taking in a course or curriculum. By having students work repeatedly on improving their perspective-taking, reflection, and conversational skills, they will build a certain confidence to critically reflect on their own prejudices and to discuss complex subjects in an open and respectful manner. You can structurally implement perspective-taking and open dialogue by using the following suggestions:

- Integrate perspective-taking exercises and open dialogues at multiple moments in the curriculum. When implementing 'Playing Perspectives' or 'The Square' link the topic to cases that are relevant to the course and the students at those moments. Discuss how their experience is different or the same when they have been exposed to this type of

educational activity more often. Also have students reflect on how their skills regarding listening, speaking, and working together have changed.

- Discuss how building perspective-taking skills and partaking in open dialogues creates a safe environment in which complex topics can be discussed. Make a plan with students on how they can and want to bring back their new skillset in other courses. Brainstorm about how they can also use their experiences at work and in social situations to ensure a safe conversation.
- For more information about dialogues and tools to facilitate conversations about difficult and sensitive subjects, sign up for the workshop [Conversations about difficult and sensitive topics](#) by Sanne Elling and Frans Prins.