

IDENTIFYING OPTIONS



AGENDA

- Starter
- To Go or Not to Go?
- Many Possibilities
- Finding Options / Guest Speaker
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize that identifying options is an important part of the decision making process.

Students will explore the benefits of considering multiple options.

Students will generate a list of options in response to a given situation.

Students will practice listening to information and identifying options that are available to them.

Materials Needed

- A guest speaker who will spend 10 to 15 minutes talking to students about options they might wish to consider when making decisions appropriate to their lives. (Consider topics that are currently issues in your school. For example, you might invite a school counselor to address handling personal problems; an administrator to address dealing with school rules; a high school counselor to address preparation for high school; a public health nurse or police

officer to address issues of personal health, safety, or the use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.)
(Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Write the words “options,” “choices,” and “alternatives” on the board. Prompt students to begin thinking about the concept of options by asking, “What do these three words have in common?”

Lead students to understand that these three words are synonyms and that they all mean “opportunities to pick what is wanted.” Tell students that they’re going to determine how important options can be when making decisions. (Leave the three words on the board for use in Part II.)

Part I To Go or Not to Go? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that identifying options is an important part of the decision making process.

1. Students listen to a story.

Ask students to listen as you read the following story aloud:

Mike is at his father’s house today. He discovers that he has left his hair gel at his mother’s house. He’s upset with himself for forgetting it, since he made plans to go to the school play tonight and doesn’t want to go with bad hair. He fumes about it for a while, and finally decides not to go to the play.

2. Students identify and discuss options.

Begin a discussion about the story by asking students if they can understand or sympathize with Mike’s dilemma. Allow some discussion without making any comments other than to encourage students to explain their opinions. Then, focus the discussion on how Mike came to make his decision by asking questions such as the following:

- Why was Mike upset?
- What did Mike decide to do? Why?
- What choices did Mike think he had? (He thought he had only two choices: go to the play with bad hair or stay at home.)
- What else could Mike have done? (He could have borrowed some gel from someone at home or from a friend. He could have asked his father to drive him to the store to buy some gel. He could have asked his mother if she could bring the gel to him. If his mother lived nearby, he could have gone back to her house and picked up the gel.)

Point out that Mike had more choices than he thought he had. Make the observation that Mike did not take the time to consider all of his options before he made his decision to stay home; if Mike had given his situation a little more thought, he might have made a different decision.

3. Students are reminded of their personal power.

Circle the words you wrote on the board at the beginning of the class. Then, draw an arrow from the circle and write the words “personal power” after it. Tell students that each time they review options or choices before making an important decision, they are exercising personal power.

Part II Many Possibilities (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students consider multiple options, and then generate a list of options in response to a situation.

1. Students analyze information and identify decision makers.

Challenge students to consider a scenario in which someone makes a decision. Remind them to listen carefully and to think about how the decision was made. Then, read the following story out loud:

Lara and Alec are friends and are working together on a project. They get into a fight because Lara thinks she’s doing all of the work. Lara criticizes Alec, and they stop speaking to each other. The project is finished, but the friendship is broken.

To guide students in analyzing the information they heard, ask questions such as the following. If students disagree about a point, reread the paragraph aloud.

- Who made a decision in this story?
- What was the decision? (Lara made a decision to criticize Alec. If some students argue that Alec made a decision not to help on the project, point out that the information tells us only that Lara “thinks she’s doing all of the work,” and we don’t really know for sure if Alec is not helping or doing his share.)
- What was the consequence, or result, of the decision? (The friendship is broken.)

2. Students brainstorm lists of options.

Organize the class into groups of three or four students. Explain that students will work in groups to list options that Lara could have considered that wouldn’t have resulted in her losing a friend. Remind the class that this is brainstorming, so students should try to think of as many options as they can. Explain that no response is wrong; they are to list the first options that come to mind.

When most groups have finished, have members of each group read one of the options they listed. Summarize the response, and write it on the board. Continue having groups read the options they listed until students feel that they have explored every possibility.

3. Students review options and select the best ones.

Guide the class to review the complete list of options and identify two or three that Lara could have done that would not have resulted in her losing a friend. Suggest that students focus on options that seem most reasonable and realistic to them—options that they would consider doing if they were in the same situation.

Point out that like Mike and Lara in the two scenarios they discussed, students will find that some options will come to them quickly and easily. Remind them to avoid making decisions based only on the obvious options, because there are usually other options available. Tell students to always take a minute or two to think beyond the obvious options before making a decision.

Explain that if they just can't seem to think of any options, they should talk to someone; sometimes it helps to get more information or another point of view.

Part III Finding Options / Guest Speaker (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students listen to information and learn about options that are available to them.

1. Prepare the guest speaker.

Prior to class, explain to the speaker what students will be doing in this lesson. Be sure that the speaker understands the purpose of their visit and the time limit. Have the guest decide whether to entertain questions and comments during or after the presentation, and ask that they tell students about this preference. Suggest that the guest give some personal information and background before getting into the body of the presentation.

2. Students listen to the presentation.

Introduce the speaker to the class. Remind students to listen actively. Encourage them to take notes about what they learn or to write down questions they may wish to ask.

3. Students respond to what they have heard.

If time permits, invite students to share their thoughts about what they have heard. To prompt the discussion, ask students to comment about any options they now know about that they had never considered before, options they learned about that they think are unrealistic, or any of their own ideas or suggestions that were generated by the speaker's presentation.

If you do not have time for this discussion during class, you may want to have students write a review of the speaker's presentation as homework.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to describe what they can do when they need to identify options. Ask them to explain how identifying their options will affect their confidence about the decisions they make. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Ultimately, decisions are always yours to make.
- Before making decisions, especially important ones, take the time to think of as many options as possible.
- If you need more information or help, ask for it.

Student Assessment

1. Why should you consider several options before making a decision?
2. When you are faced with a decision, what can you do to determine your different options?
3. Describe a situation in your life in which you made a decision without considering all of your options. Looking back, what other options were available? If you had seen these other options at the time, would your decision have been different? Why or why not?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“When a person acts without knowledge of what he thinks, feels, needs, or wants, he does not yet have the option of choosing to act differently.”

As a class, discuss the meaning of this quote. Have students draw pictures illustrating the quote.

Math Connection

Have students read the book *Spaghetti and Meatballs for All!* by Marilyn Burns.

Have small groups of students use tiles to construct different ways that the story’s hosts could arrange the tables to seat all their guests.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about a recurring decision that’s easy to make (e.g., what to eat for lunch, what to wear).

Have students share their choices with the class. Were there some choices that were easy for some students, but not for others? Why?

Using Technology

Have the class view *The Yearling*, the 1946 classic based on the novel by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. In it, a young boy raises a pet fawn, which his father must eventually destroy.

Have the class talk about what Jody’s options were when the deer was critically injured, and why he came to the decision he did.

Homework

Have students watch their favorite TV show. Have them write a paragraph about a decision the show's main character faced, whether the character considered all of their options, and what the character could have done differently.

Discuss students' work as a class. Create a class chart to compare the results.

Additional Resources

Have students search for a recent article that focuses on teens and mentions, either directly or indirectly, a decision these teens have made.

Have students read the article and identify a decision the teens made. Have students brainstorm a list of options the teens may have had before making their decision.