

What Is It?

Choice-making is a universal and individualized strategy in which an adult presents opportunities to a child or group of children to indicate preferences by choosing between two or more presented items or activities at various times across the day. Choice-making provides opportunities for children to actively contribute to their own learning and to their early learning communities, and promotes the development of self-advocacy skills and self-determination.

When to Use It

- Embedded across children's daily activities and routines, such as during mealtime, play time, book reading, and crafts.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

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| □ | 1. Determine opportunities across the day in which choices may be presented. Choices might include which materials to use within an activity, the order in which the steps of an activity are completed, ways to participate in the activity (e.g., asking children if they would like to sit on a chair, on the floor, or on a cushion while looking at books), and/or the activity itself (e.g., reading a book or doing an art activity). |
| □ | 2. Present the choices to the whole class before and/or during activities throughout the day. Choices may be presented verbally and visually (e.g., using objects, photos, pictures). |
| □ | 3. Immediately engage children in their selection when they make a choice. |
| □ | 4. Offer additional choices during the activity to support children's continued participation and engagement. |

Example

Mx. Traci is a preschool teacher and wants to promote participation and engagement during classroom routines. They feel overwhelmed about where to start because there are so many routines across the day. They decide to start by offering choices to their young students across circle time, which consists of morning greeting, calendar, daily schedule, weather, and a gross motor activity. They decide that they can offer choices to their students about how to give the morning greeting (high five, thumbs up, wave, silly movement), which clothes to put on the classroom stuffed bear given the weather outside, and which gross motor activity to end circle time with. Once Mx. Traci is feeling like they can provide all of the choices they planned during circle time with ease, they build in more choices across the day. They offer choices to children about which sink to wash hands in, what good-bye greeting to use during the final circle of the day, and whether to stomp like elephants or hop like bunnies when transitioning out to the playground during recess.

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Brainstorm an array of possible choices across activities and routines. Vary the choices that are offered across opportunities. For example, for an art activity do not always offer the choice of a marker or crayons. Sometimes offer dot markers, chalk, paint, etc.
- Consider children's preferences when determining choices to offer.
- Present two or more choices each time. Make sure to only offer choices that you can honor.
- For information about individualizing this strategy for a child that needs more support, see the "Individualized Choice-Making" intervention guide.

Resources

Dunlap, G., & Liso, D. (2004). [Using choice and preference to promote improved behavior.](#)

Green, K. B., Mays, N. M., & Jolivet, K. (2011). [Making choices: A proactive way to improve behaviors for young children with challenging behaviors.](#) *Beyond Behavior*, 20(1), 25-31.

McCormick, K. M., Jolivet, K., & Ridgley, R. (2003). [Choice making as an intervention strategy for young children.](#) *Young Exceptional Children*, 6(2), 3-10.