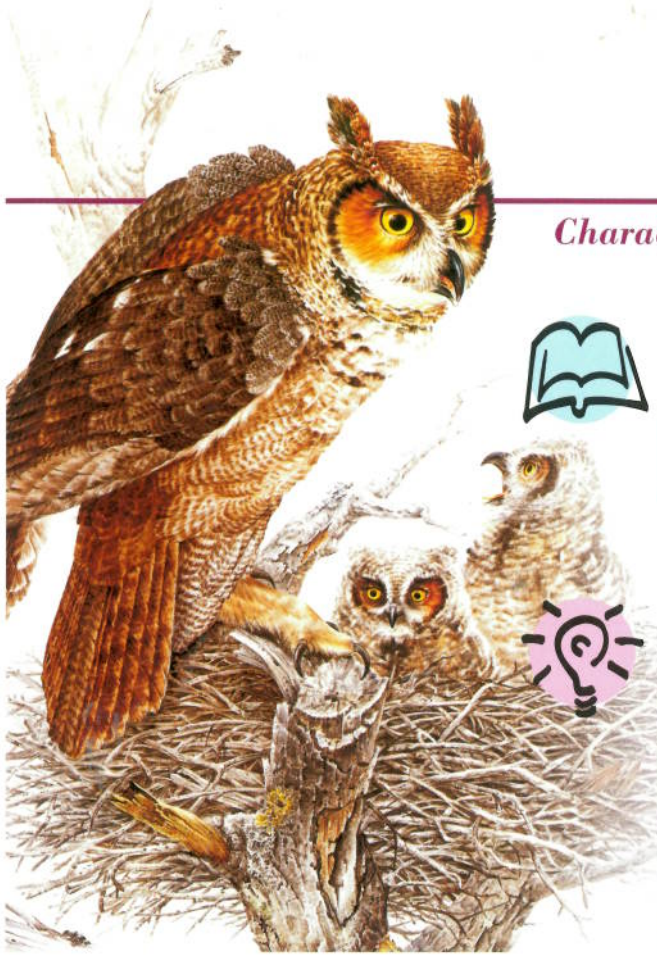


WISDOM

Character First!® Elementary Series 4, Booklet 9



Definition

Making practical applications of truth in daily decisions.



Illustration

The owl has been regarded as a symbol of wisdom for centuries. One reason for this is that an owl has two large eyes and excellent hearing, enabling it to receive large amounts of information regarding its surroundings. Discover on page 4 how Great Horned Owls apply what they learn to what they do.

George Washington's parents wanted their son to be a wise man. Little did they know that they were preparing one of the world's greatest leaders and the "Father of His Country." Read on page 6 how George Washington learned the secrets of leadership during his days as a surveyor.

I Will:

- listen to my parents and teachers.
- learn from correction.
- choose my friends carefully.
- remember that there are consequences to all my actions.
- ask, "What is the right thing to do?"



Application

Wisdom is more than making a good decision here or there. It is *consistently* doing the right thing day after day. Follow the lessons on pages 8–14 to help your students develop good decision-making skills that will last a lifetime.



Praise

One danger of character education is settling for an *awareness* of character without requiring an *expression* of character. Learn the difference between *awareness* and *expression* on page 15. Find out how teachers can make the difference.



What Is Wisdom?

Making
practical
applications
of truth
in daily
decisions.

WISDOM

vs. Foolishness

Wis•dom *n.* **1:** making the best use of knowledge, experience, and understanding. **2:** learning; erudition. **3:** good judgment; sagacity.

Wisdom is derived from the Anglo-Saxon root word *wis*, meaning “wise; understanding truth; knowing,” and the suffix *-dom*, meaning “judgment.”

Wisdom is not mere intelligence. It combines an understanding of truth with the good judgment to apply it. In other words, wisdom is not just *information*—it is *application*. It turns *knowing* right into *doing* right.

“We must act with wisdom,” said President Theodore Roosevelt, “or else our adherence to right will be mere sound without substance.”

Wisdom Keeps It in Balance

If incomplete or out of balance, good character quickly becomes bad character. For example, determination is good, but not if it is insensitive to others. Deference is good, but not if it compromises what is right. Persuasiveness is good, but not if its purpose is deception.

Wisdom applies *all* the character qualities, not just some of them. It is both firm and kind, thorough and efficient, honest and sensitive, bold and discreet. By blending qualities that complement each other, wisdom keeps character in perfect balance.



The Concept of Wisdom

Wisdom is applying truth to all of life's decisions. To make wise decisions, people should understand four points:

- First, every decision is important. Just as it takes thousands of small bricks to construct a large building, so a person's character is made up of thousands of small decisions. Every good decision adds strength to the overall structure, but every flawed decision undermines its integrity, bringing the whole building closer to ruin.
- Second, every decision has a consequence. Sometimes consequences affect just one person; other times they affect many. Sometimes consequences take place immediately, other times they are not felt for years. However, nature affirms that "what you sow is what you will reap."
- Third, every decision has a cost. To choose one direction inherently means rejecting others. To achieve goals requires time and effort. Even to use a credit card requires that the bill be paid someday.
- Fourth, every decision has a lesson. Whether the outcome is good or bad, a wise person learns from past decisions and makes better ones in the future. Even the worst failures can become the best lessons for those who are willing to learn.

The Role of Leadership

By definition, a leader is one who is farther down the road than those who follow behind. However, no matter what position a person achieves, there is always room for improvement.

Wise leadership recognizes that no one outgrows the need to build character, not even a leader. One way to communicate this is to use the inclusive "we" when speaking. It is not "You need to be patient," or "You need to obey," but "We need to show patience," and "We should all obey our authorities." By including themselves, leaders demonstrate that character is important . . . for everyone!

"I fancy many men would have arrived at wisdom, if they had not fancied they had already arrived."

—Seneca, A.D. 60

Does History Repeat Itself?

Many people falsely assume that all things continue as they are. To assume, for example, that a country will continue to be great because it had great beginnings is to ignore the repeated lessons of history.

The Roman Empire had great beginnings. Its citizens no doubt assumed that it would last forever. But even while its citizens enjoyed apparent prosperity, its foundations crumbled, leading historians to record "The Rise and the Fall of the Roman Empire."

Greece gave the world its first historical attempt at democracy, dazzling architecture, excellence in culture, and an impressive list of philosophers. However, corruption soon undermined its politics, its businesses, and the personal lives of its citizens. In time, Greece and its democracy fell because it lacked the moral fiber to sustain it.

Likewise the ancient Mayan nations developed brain surgery, excelled in mathematics and astronomy, and built an incredible network of irrigation canals. Then corruption took hold, and today it is but a ghost of the past. Without character, even the greatest societies can fall.



A nation's strength lies in the character of its people.

Racing Against the Clock

In timed events, athletes understand that every second spells the difference between triumph and defeat. Wisdom also recognizes the value of time. Every passing minute counts. If people intend to accomplish great things, they must do them *now!*



Great Horned Owl

The feather tufts that give a Great Horned Owl its name are not ears. The owl's ears are placed asymmetrically on either side of its head, allowing it to measure the time difference between sound waves reaching one ear versus the other.

Walking alone through the nearly silent woods, a man followed a narrow trail that ran beside a small creek. He stopped to admire the beautiful creation.

Lifting his head, he gazed at the top of a large pine tree. Its branches towered above everything else and swayed gently in the breeze. His eyes followed the massive trunk all the way to the bottom, where he saw something move.

It was large and brown and covered with feathers. Just as the man leaned over for a better look . . . *KRRAAHHH, KRRAAHHH!!*

The man jumped back and ducked behind another tree for protection. He looked again and caught a glimpse of what seemed to be a bird. Then he realized that it wasn't an ordinary bird; it was a Great Horned Owl.

Something was clearly wrong with this owl. Its head was stuck to one of its wings. It tried to shake free, but its head wouldn't move.

The man stepped closer, but the frightened owl threatened him with its razor-sharp claws. Retreating a few steps, the man studied the strangely shaped owl from a safer distance. What he saw amazed him! This owl wasn't stuck—it was hooked!

One hook of a shiny fishing lure was caught in the owl's beak. A second hook was stuck in its wing. No matter how hard the owl struggled, it couldn't free itself from the fishing lure.

The owl had made a wrong choice. The man figured that the owl had tried to catch what it thought was a real fish, but ended up catching a shiny lure. One of the lure's hooks had dug into its beak, and another hook dug into its wing.

He wondered how long the owl had been stranded in the forest without being able to eat, drink, or fly. One thing was certain, the owl's life was at stake, and there was no time to waste.

Marking the spot on the trail, the man ran back to his home. Inside his garage, he gathered a pair of thick leather

gloves, a cardboard box, a heavy blanket, and a strong fishing net.

The man knew he would need help to rescue the owl. A neighbor and his son were out in their yard, so the three of them raced back to the trail.

Reaching the injured owl, the man put on his thick gloves and handed the net to the young man. The neighbor held the box and together they circled the great horned owl.

On the count of three, the young man threw the net over the owl, and the man covered the net with the blanket. The owl wiggled and jerked, but the three men held it firmly as they lifted it into the cardboard box.

They carried the owl back home and drove to a wildlife refuge center several miles away. There, a veterinarian examined the owl. With the owl still partially wrapped in the net and blanket, and with the three men holding it securely, the veterinarian carefully removed the lure with his heavy pliers.



The owl was free but very weak from lack of food and water. It would take a full month of care before it would be strong enough to be released back into the wild.

The owl was fortunate that someone had found it and was able to correct its mistake. Not all wrong choices are so easily resolved. Because the consequences of wrong choices can cause deep wounds, both people and owls would do better to make right choices in the first place.

Four things help both owls and people make right choices. Let's see what we can learn from the owl's mistake. (Select a volunteer to act out the part of the owl.)

The Ears

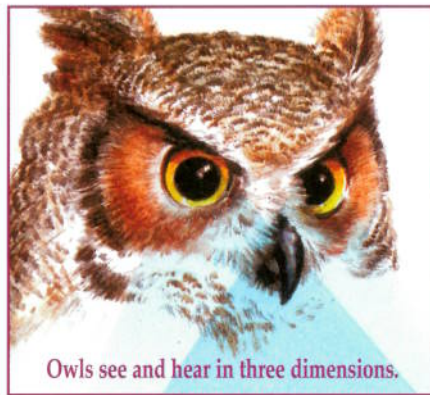
Owls make choices based on what they hear. Did that lure really sound like a fish? The ears of a great horned owl are located on the sides of its head, but one is up high, and one is down low. (Tape paper ears on volunteer, one high and the other near the jaw.)

The position of the owl's ears lets it hear everything in three dimensions—up and down, left and right, near and far. Humans estimate distance by how loud or soft something sounds, but owls can precisely pinpoint sounds. They tilt their heads to measure *exactly* what they hear so they are sure to get it right.

Wise choices depend on our ability to listen, too. We must learn from our teachers and hear the wise counsel of our parents. Don't ignore their correction, but learn from your mistakes so you can avoid making them again.

The Eyes

Owls also make choices by what they see. Did that lure really look like a real fish? The owl's eyes are huge, so huge they can't move in their sockets. (Place two large eyes on volunteer.) That's why owls turn their heads to look different directions. The great horned owl can turn its head almost in a complete circle. Each new position gives it a new perspective.



Owls see and hear in three dimensions.

Not only do owls have a good perspective on things, but they see clearly in the dark. Their eyes gather enough light to function well when no one else can see.

Wise people also learn from what they see. They consider every angle to gain a full perspective before they make a choice. They learn from their own experiences and the experiences of others in order to see clearly when things otherwise don't make sense.

The Wings

Owls are also careful how they fly. Its wings are designed in such a way that the owl flies silently. (Give volunteer two wings or feathers to hold.)

Great horned owls need every possible advantage in hunting. Silent flight allows them to approach and surprise their prey

without a sound. Since the noise of another bird could spoil their hunting, owls choose to hunt alone.

Wise decision makers know that every action has a consequence. They know that the actions of their friends have consequences, too. That's why they surround themselves with *good* friends who encourage them to make wise decisions.

The Mouth

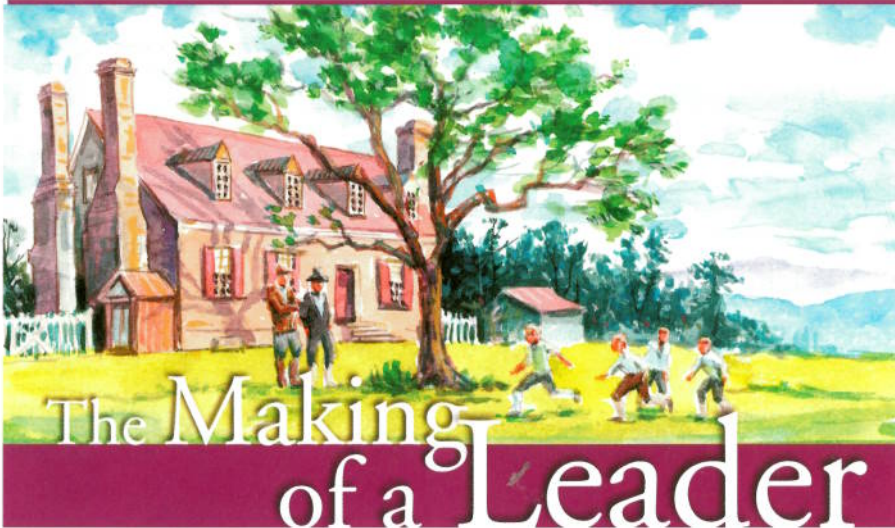
Owls also control what goes into their mouths. Owls don't have teeth to chew their food, so they swallow it whole. That's why they are careful to put into their mouths only what they can swallow, and to keep from their mouths anything that would hurt them. (Tape a large mouth to volunteer.)

Wise people also watch what goes in and out of their mouths. They stay away from things that might harm them, and they avoid saying things that might harm others. They choose their words carefully, and unless they have something good or constructive to say, they keep their mouths shut.

Sometimes we can correct our wrong choices. Other times, wrong choices leave permanent damage. Wise people live like the owl, seeing and hearing as much as possible so they know what they should do and what they should say. Because every choice has a consequence, wise people strive to make right choices.

Supplies:

- 2 paper ears
- 2 large eyes
- 2 wings or feathers
- Paper mouth
- Tape



Pull it tight!" "Now move it farther to the left!" "That's it. Now don't move!" George Washington lowered his head and squinted through the small eyepiece. "Okay, I think we got it!" he shouted to the men holding a long surveying rod in the distance.

At 16 years of age, George Washington started his first great adventure. Lord Thomas Fairfax, one of the wealthiest landowners in Virginia, hired George and a group of men to measure parts of his land—over 5 million acres of dense forests, clear rivers, and lush valleys with wild animals in abundance.

The leader of the expedition turned to his young assistant. "You're becoming a fine surveyor, George. You'll make an excellent leader of your own team someday!"

George enjoyed surveying, but he always dreamed of becoming a military officer. He loved adventure and wanted to be like his older brother, Lawrence, who was a general in the Virginia militia.

However, George's mother wouldn't let him join the militia. George didn't understand why. He was 16 years old now, and all his other friends were going off to war! Nevertheless, George listened to his mother and followed her

instructions. Maybe she knew what was best after all.

Did you spot the "I Will"? George listened to his mother's instruction.

As it turns out, staying home from the militia was one of the best things that could have happened to George. Not only was his life spared from an early death, but that is when Lord Fairfax asked George to help survey his land.

"Tell me, young man, what do you know about surveying?" the distinguished nobleman asked.

"A bit here and there, Sir," George replied, trying not to sound nervous. "I discovered my father's surveying equipment after he died and taught myself how to use it. I've measured a few plots of land for my neighbors, but nothing extremely large."

"Is that so?" Lord Fairfax asked curiously. "It is rare to meet a young man with your initiative and good sense. How would you like to help survey my land? I'm putting together an exploring party and would like you to be part of it."

George could hardly believe what he heard. "Yes, sir!" he replied with excite-

ment. "I would love to go!"

In March 1748, George and the others began their month-long expedition across the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Shenandoah Valley. George became good friends with most of the men. They liked George and tried to teach him how to be a better surveyor. George felt grateful for having good friends who would help him grow.

Other men on the trip weren't quite as nice. They got angry easily and drank so much whiskey they became sick. George was cautious around these men, for he didn't want to follow their ways.

Did you spot the "I Will"? George chose his friends carefully—men who would be a good influence on him.

Week after week, George and the team practiced surveying, often in harsh winds and driving rain. They slept under the stars at night and cooked their meals on an open fire. Once, George found himself face-to-face with a deadly rattlesnake. George started to feel like a real pioneer!

"That's a good day's work," announced the leader of the expedition late one afternoon. "Let's head back to camp for the night. It will be dark soon."

George gathered his equipment and saddled his tall, gray horse. On the way back to camp, he noticed a fresh set of animal tracks across the dirt trail. "Whoa," he said to his horse. "What do we have here?"

"Looks like a bear," said one of his companions. "Its tracks are still fresh, and they're headed down our path."



George had learned many things living in the wilderness. One of those lessons was to think about the consequence of all his actions—where he walked, what he ate, and even what he said.

“Maybe we should go around to the right,” he suggested. “I hate to think of what would happen if we came across that bear. I’d rather take the safest route.”

Did you spot the “I Will”? George remembered that there are consequences to actions, and he chose the safest route.

George and his crew made it safely back to camp. After eating a simple meal of fish caught from a nearby river, the men prepared to get a good night’s sleep. One man gathered a pile of leaves to lie on, and another wadded up an old shirt for a pillow.

George, on the other hand, cut some soft hay from a nearby field and dropped it on the ground for an extra cushion. After everyone had fallen asleep, George awoke to a crackling noise and the smell of something burning.

At first he thought he was dreaming, then he felt sparks flying around and falling on his skin. “Fire!” he heard someone yell as he opened his eyes to see the hay around him ablaze. “Wake up, the hay is on fire!”

Fortunately, no one was hurt in the incident. “Who put this hay so close to the fire?” asked the leader of the expedition.

George knew he hadn’t been as careful as he should. “It was I,” George confessed. “I scattered the hay too close to the open fire.”

“May this be a lesson to all of you,” said the leader sternly. “One more mistake like this and we could all be dead.”

George took the correction to heart and never again treated dangers, such as fire, so lightly.

Did you spot the “I Will”? George learned from his leader’s correction.



The next morning, George and his team set out to measure the next section of land. Suddenly, they heard whispers coming from a clump of trees at the end of the trail.

“What’s that?” George asked the man next to him. “It sounds like someone’s watching us.”

Just then, two Indian warriors stepped into the open. As George looked around, more warriors appeared from behind bushes, trees, and rocks until there were about 30 in all.

One of George’s co-workers started to reach for his rifle. “Wait a minute!” George said. “Let’s think about what we should do. They don’t seem threatening, and we haven’t even tried talking to them yet.”

The leader of George’s expedition stepped down from his horse and approached the first two Indians. After talking for a minute, he turned to his men with a big smile on his face. “Don’t worry,” he said, “they mean us no harm.”

George and his friends shared food and drink with their new friends, and the Indian warriors demonstrated one of their native dances in return. George was glad that he and his team had arrived at the right thing to do. They might have had a serious fight on their hands if they hadn’t.

Did you spot the “I Will”? George asked himself, “What is the right thing to do?”

George’s first major expedition finally came to an end. He did so well that soon the local leaders appointed him as the official surveyor of Culpeper County.

In just a few years, George would finally reach his dream of becoming a military officer. While he would never return to the profession of surveying, the lessons he learned during those early years would guide him throughout his life—how to survive in rugged conditions, lead diverse groups of men, and map out projects so that each piece fits together as part of a larger picture.

George Washington proved to be not only a wise surveyor, but Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, President of the Constitutional Convention, and the first President of the United States of America. Indeed, he was one of the wisest leaders the world has ever known.



Will to Be Wise

I Will Listen to My Parents and Teachers.

Sir Isaac Newton, the great scientist and mathematician, valued the instruction of his parents and teachers. He once observed that “man can only stand taller than his ancestors when he stands upon their shoulders.”

Instead of resisting good advice and reacting against experienced counsel, wise young people listen to and show gratefulness for the failures and successes of others.

I Will Learn From Correction.

Foolish people fail to learn from their mistakes because of stubbornness and pride. Rather than accepting correction and changing their ways, they tend to make the same mistakes over and over again.

Wisdom, on the other hand, requires humility to admit a wrong, courage to accept a consequence, boldness to ask for forgiveness, and initiative to try a better way. In many ways, the difference between foolishness and wisdom is like canoers approaching a waterfall. Wise paddlers get out and carry their canoe to safety, while foolish paddlers continue on their course until it is too late.

I Will Choose My Friends Carefully.

In much the same way that an unstruck tuning fork vibrates in accord with one which has just been struck, children’s behavior often “vibrates” in accord with that of their friends. Children who choose friends from those who want to grow in character will find themselves drawn in that direction, too. Conversely, friends who don’t care about character issues tend to bring out the worst in their companions.

One of the best ways children can grow in wisdom is to find friends among wise adults rather than foolish peers.



Character Training Never Ends

I Will Remember That There are Consequences to All My Actions.

Just as the laws of nature prove that every action causes an equal and opposite reaction, children experience consequences to their actions, too. For example, *truthfulness* wins a person’s trust, *responsibility* earns freedom, and *diligence* brings success.

Unfortunately, the relationships between actions and their consequences are not always immediate or clear cut. They have to be learned over time. In many respects that is what character training is all about—recognizing the link between actions and consequences in order to make better decisions.

I Will Ask, “What Is the Right Thing to Do?”

Unfortunately, many children justify choices by asking “What’s wrong with it?” This question suggests that everything is okay until it is proven wrong, and if any part of an activity is okay, then the whole matter must also be okay.

Wisdom, however, takes a different approach. Wisdom asks, “What is the *right* thing to do?” It builds choices from the foundation up, choosing only those words and actions that are right. Wisdom assumes that if any part of a choice is wrong, then the whole act is wrong.



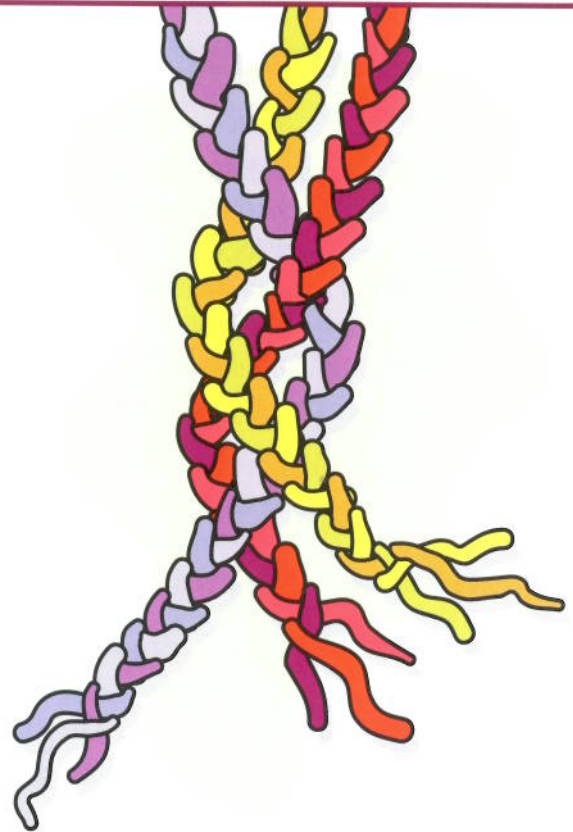
Strength in Character (Project)

Prepare three samples of rope to demonstrate their individual strengths. Begin with a very thin piece of rope—so thin that you can break it in front of the children. Then show a thicker piece of rope, too difficult to break but easy to cut with scissors. Lastly, show a thick piece of rope (you may need to braid several ropes together) that is too strong to break and too thick to cut.

Ask students what makes the difference between the three pieces of rope. Many will say “thickness,” which is partly true. More specifically, it is the *number of strands* in a piece of rope that gives it strength. The more strands, the stronger.

Similarly, the more character qualities children possess, the stronger individuals they will become. This strength is called *wisdom*—applying truth from all the character qualities to life’s daily decisions.

Teach children how to braid nine “strands of character” into a single rope. Give children nine pieces of yarn, each piece about 3 feet long, to represent the nine character qualities in this series of curriculum. Divide the strands into sets of three. Tie the ends together before braiding each set, then braid the three sets together into one rope.



Supplies:

- 3-foot lengths of yarn (colorful if possible)
- Scissors

Variations:

- To demonstrate the positive effect students can have on each other, combine the character braids of three students into one larger rope. Keep braiding the class’s “character” until you reach maximum capacity. Mount the class ropes, and label *Character Makes Us Strong!*
- Include character qualities from other *Character First!*® materials to form an extensive bulletin board. (Note that each series of curriculum is conveniently divisible by three.)

Character Makes Us Strong

SERIES ONE	SERIES TWO
Attentiveness	Responsibility
Obedience	Patience
Truthfulness	Initiative
Gratefulness	Self-Control
Generosity	Punctuality
Orderliness	Resourcefulness
Forgiveness	Discretion
Sincerity	Creativity
Virtue	Tolerance

SERIES THREE	SERIES FOUR
Diligence	Dependability
Loyalty	Thoroughness
Hospitality	Determination
Sensitivity	Thriftiness
Enthusiasm	Availability
Flexibility	Deference
Discernment	Compassion
Cautiousness	Persuasiveness
Boldness	Wisdom



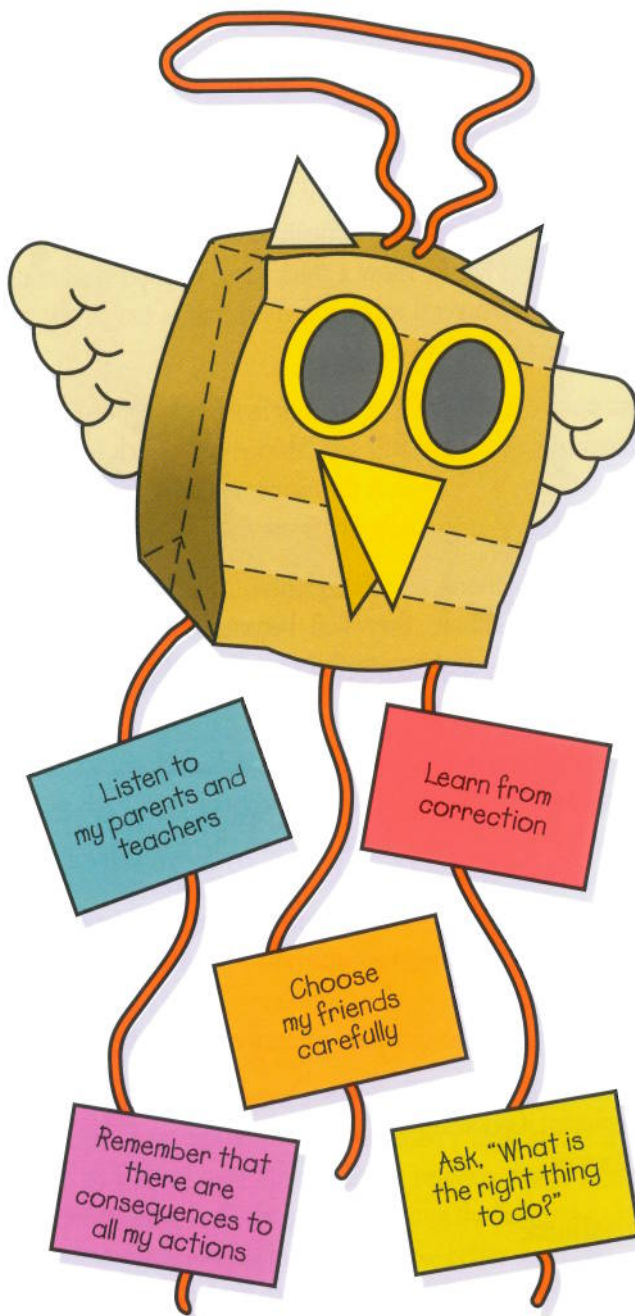
Owl Mobile (Craft)

Create an owl mobile as a reminder to make wise decisions. Fill a brown paper lunch sack with crumpled newspaper, and tape the sack closed. Cut wings and ears out of brown paper, then cut eyes and a mouth out of yellow paper. Use a black marker to color the pupils of the eyes and a red marker to color the inside of the mouth. Tape the ears and wings to the sack, and attach the eyes and mouth with glue.

Tape three, 1-foot lengths of yarn to the bottom of the sack. Write each "I Will" of wisdom on a small piece of blank paper, and tape the "I Wills" to the yarn. Tape another piece of yarn, about 2 feet long, to the top of the sack as a hanger.

Supplies:

- Brown paper lunch sacks
- Brown and yellow paper
- Black and red markers
- 5 feet of yarn per owl
- Scissors, glue, and clear tape
- Blank paper
- Pens or pencils



Memory Work

I will listen to my parents,
And I'll hear my teachers, too.
I'll remember there's a consequence
To everything I do.

I will learn from their correction,
And I'll choose my friends with care.
I will stay away from foolishness
That only brings a snare.

To live a life of character,
Commitment is the key.
When things get tough, I'll prove to you
That you can count on me!

110 Rules of Civility (Project)

As a youth, George Washington realized the importance of daily decisions. To help himself make right choices each day, Washington copied out his "110 Rules of Civility." Research Washington's rules of civility as a class. Your school or local library should be able to help. List the rules, and have children grade themselves according to Washington's standards of civility to see how they might improve.



Character Cards

Remind children to make good choices in life by distributing the *Wisdom Character Card*. Review the "I Will" commitments on the back of the card and the lesson of the great horned owl. Make practical applications of the "I Wills" to life at school and at home. Inspire the children with personal illustrations of how daily choices, big and small, have made a difference in your life.



George Washington

From boyhood, George Washington dreamed of becoming a military officer. He waited for the day to wear a soldier's uniform like his older brother, Lawrence, and have adventures in far away places. But how likely was that for a young Virginia farmer?



Little did George or his family realize at the time that he would eventually become one of America's greatest leaders. Indeed, he would be known as the founder of his country! It was good that the Washingtons trained their son to make wise decisions in his youth, for when George was older, his decisions would affect millions. Read the story on page 6, based on George Washington's years as a surveyor, to see the making of a great leader.

After leading the American colonies to victory against Great Britain, George Washington was asked again to lead his country, this time as President. At the end of his life, one writer fittingly described him as "First in war, First in peace, First in the hearts of his countrymen."

Choices



Lindsay L. Sholtess

L.L.S.



Life is filled with dai-ly choi-ces that we all must



make. In mak-ing these de-ci-sions, I choose the road my life will take. I'll learn from those who guide and cor-



rect me when I'm wrong. I'll choose my friends with cau-tion, and won't just go a-long. There are choi-ces,



choi-ces, to make ev-'ry day. I will choose to do what's right, I won't be led as-tray. There are choi-ces,



choi-ces, I'll think my ac-tions through. I will make the wis-est choice in all I say or do.



Activities

Little Choices (Craft)

Just as tiny pieces of stained glass fit together to form a large masterpiece, life's "little" choices work together to form a person's character. To remind students of the impact of their choices, copy the following maxim onto a pane of "stained glass."

- Sow a thought, reap an action.
- Sow an action, reap a habit.
- Sow a habit, reap a character.
- Sow a character, reap a destiny.

Give students two squares of waxed paper. Use a food grater to spread shavings of old crayons on the first square of paper, and place the second square on top. Cover both sides of the waxed paper with a smooth dish towel before ironing the two pieces together. Trim and tape edges, then hang the "stained glass" with floral wire. Copy or write the quotation on a separate piece of paper, then tape the paper to the stained glass.

Supplies:

- Waxed paper and crayons
- Smooth dish towel
- Food grater
- Clothes iron
- Floral wire
- Clear tape
- Pens
- Paper
- Scissors



Points to Ponder:

- Wisdom is understanding that every choice, even a "little" one, has a consequence. Over time, life's "little" choices become major habits that are difficult to reverse.
- Children who want their lives to form a pleasant picture 10 years from now must begin shaping the right pieces today. Building character is like building a magnificent stained glass window—it happens one decision at a time.

Placemat Weave (Craft)

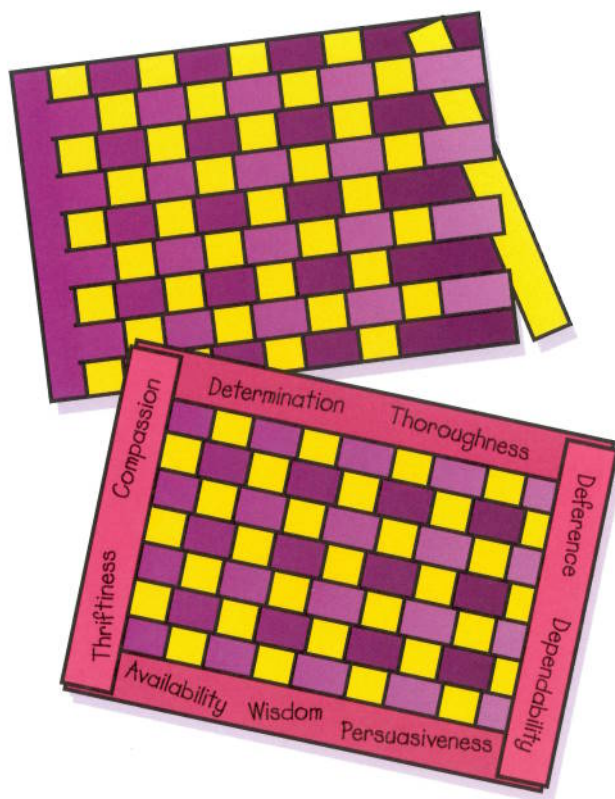
Remind children to apply truth to *all* of life's decisions by weaving a placemat to take home. Give children three pieces each of colored or construction paper. Cut the first piece into strips lengthwise, but stopping one inch short of the edge. Cut the second piece into strips running the short direction.

Weave the short strips into the first piece of paper as shown. Alternate positions to form a checkered pattern. When finished, glue a frame to the placemat using a third piece of paper. Cut four strips out of the paper lengthwise, fold along their centerlines, glue to the edges of the placemat, and remove any excess paper with scissors.

When placemats are complete, write several character qualities around the border. Let students select the qualities they especially want to practice over the next few months.

Supplies:

- Colored or construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Pens or pencils

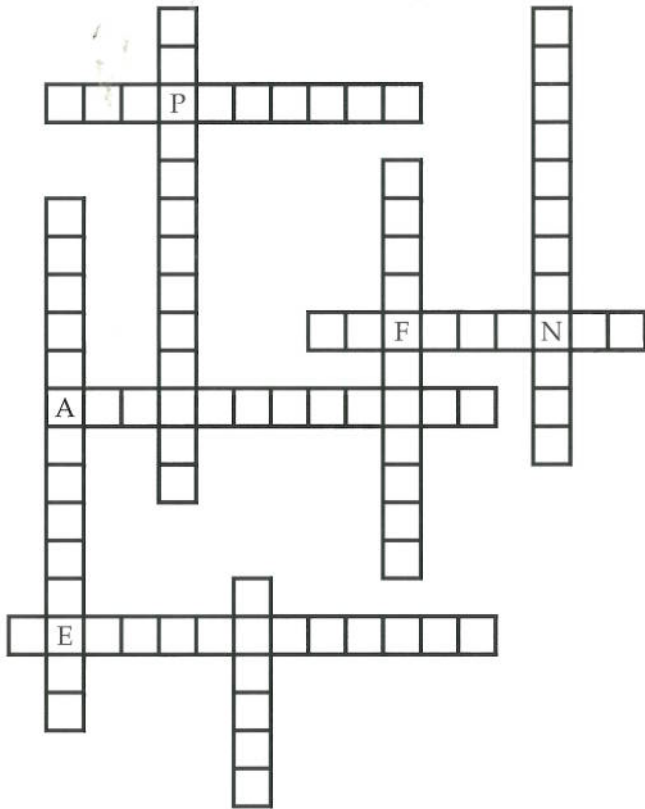


Character Connection (Game)

Just as it takes many words to form a crossword puzzle, there are many character qualities that go into making decisions. As a reminder for children to apply character to their daily choices, complete the following puzzle using the nine character qualities in this series.

Find the Following Character Qualities:

Dependability, Thoroughness, Determination,
Thriftiness, Availability, Deference, Compassion,
Persuasiveness, Wisdom



© Copyright 2001 Character Training Institute. May be reproduced for educational use only.



Crystal Garden (Object Lesson)

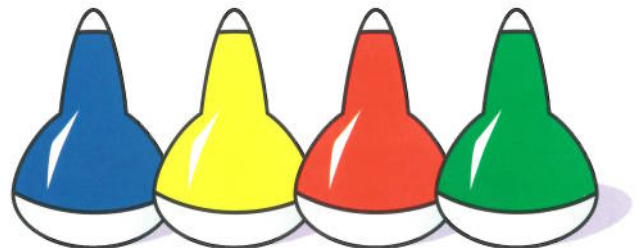
Conduct the following experiment to illustrate the impact of daily decisions. Fill a bowl with charcoal briquettes, and mix the following "crystal solution" in a cup. Apply several spoonfuls of the solution to the briquettes. Drop food coloring over the briquettes to add color. Small crystals will start to form within an hour. Repeat application each day until you run out of solution. Use different food coloring each time to add variety to your "crystal garden." Salt crystals are very fragile, so be careful not to bump the briquettes.

Crystal Solution:

- 6 tablespoons water
- 6 tablespoons salt
- 1 tablespoon ammonia
- 6 tablespoons laundry bluing (found in the laundry supply section of most grocery stores)

Other Supplies:

- 5-6 charcoal briquettes
- Disposable cup, bowl, and spoon
- Various food coloring



Points to Ponder:

- Every good decision a child makes is like adding more solution to a crystal garden. Their lives become a beautiful display of wisdom.
- Just as good decisions improve a child's life, making bad decisions is like pouring acid on their gardens. If not corrected, acid will destroy the crystals, the briquettes, and even the bowl. In the same manner, unresolved problems in a child's life can have devastating consequences.
- To safely demonstrate the destruction of crystals, drip water over the briquettes. After the crystals are gone, the only remedy is to start adding solution again.



Definition for Young Children

Wisdom is making right choices every day.

Picture This (Object Lesson)

To help young children picture the concept of wisdom, bring the listed supplies to class and explain the following:

Supplies:

- Glass jar (or other transparent container)
- Bag of marbles



Wisdom is like a jar full of marbles. Every time you make a good decision, you add a marble to the jar. When you make a *lifetime* of good decisions, you fill the jar to the top. (Drop marbles one at a time into a transparent container.)

Wisdom is filling your life with good decisions. When you do the right thing today, then you do the right thing tomorrow, and then you do it again the next day, it is like adding more marbles to the jar. (Add more marbles.)

However, sometimes we make bad decisions. When we do, it is like taking a marble out of the jar. (Remove several marbles.) Making bad decisions is *foolishness*. One way to avoid foolishness is to listen to the instructions of your parents or teachers. When they correct you for being foolish, learn from their correction before you lose all your marbles!

Whenever you are faced with a choice, think of the jar of marbles. Do you want a full jar? Then keep making good decisions so you can be full of wisdom!

Variation:

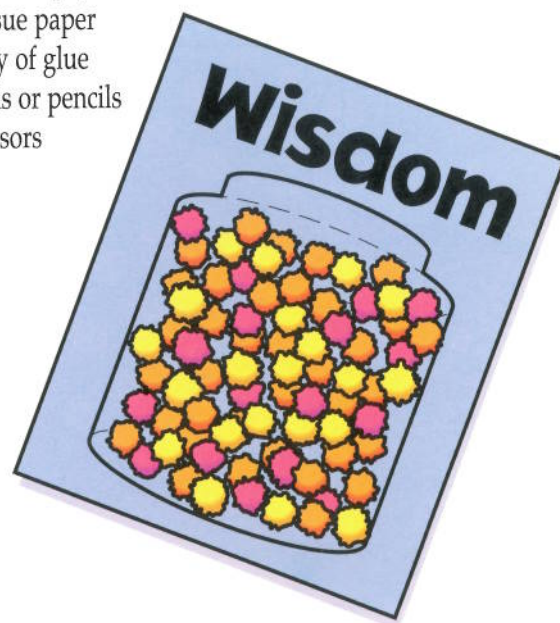
Use marbles and a jar to keep track of your children's decisions. Each time you notice someone making a good choice, recognize the student by adding a marble to the class jar. Award the class when the jar is completely filled.

Full of Wisdom (Craft)

Make a reminder of the marble lesson by drawing a large jar and copying it onto colored paper for each child. Write *Wisdom* at the top of the page. Cut small squares of colored tissue paper, crinkle them into wads, dip them into a tray of glue, and fill the jar until it is near the top. Each wad of tissue paper represents another good decision.

Supplies:

- Colored paper
- Tissue paper
- Tray of glue
- Pens or pencils
- Scissors





More Than Awareness

There is a subtle danger that threatens the success of any character-building program. The danger is to settle for an *awareness* of character instead of striving for the *expression* of character. An awareness of character develops as students learn definitions, hear stories, create banners, and engage in other character-related activities. However, an awareness of character does not guarantee an expression of character.

The *expression* of character implies physical action rather than mere knowledge of definitions. It is one thing to *know* what is right, but the real proof of character education comes when children *do* what is right.

When evaluating the expression of character in your class, consider the following three issues:

- Expressing character requires accountability. Setting standards for character is not enough; it is only a first step. Once character standards are set, everyone must be held accountable for expressing them. This includes teachers and administrators just as much as students. Therefore, school staff deserve praise like anyone else.
- A second requirement for expressing character is to recognize the character issues in daily decisions. Because every day offers numerous character lessons just waiting to be learned, teachers must take advantage of these “teachable moments.” For example, arriving late to class, pushing others in line, talking rudely to schoolmates, and not paying attention in class are all teachable moments for character. Therefore, praise and correction should be an integral part of each day rather than a separate lesson limited to a few minutes.
- Finally, true expression of character goes beyond the doors of the classroom. It extends to the playground, lunchroom, sports activities, bus routes, businesses, government agencies, churches, and ultimately, into the home. This requires everyone in a community to “be on the same page” for character training to be most effective. Therefore, it is critical for parents, teachers, employers, and even government officials to praise character.



© Copyright 2001 Character Training Institute. May be reproduced for educational use only.

Ways to Praise

Praise children for the following:

- Avoiding foolish activities
- Appreciating what they learn from their teachers
- Changing their behavior when corrected
- Associating with positive influences

Praise wise decisions:

Wise decisions take the form of many different character qualities. Look for opportunities to praise children for all the qualities in this series.

- **Dependability:** “I was counting on you to bring back your assignments. You showed dependability by keeping your promise.”
- **Thoroughness:** “You’ve improved a lot in your handwriting this year. Paying attention to small details is not easy.”
- **Determination:** “I know you haven’t always enjoyed learning science. I admire the way that you stayed with it to the end.”
- **Thriftiness:** “Thank you for reminding me to turn out the lights when I forget. You’ve saved a lot of electricity here at school.”
- **Availability:** “I appreciate your willingness to run so many errands for me. You’ve saved me a lot of time.”
- **Deference:** “You’ve gotten along with the other students very well this month. That makes my job much easier.”
- **Compassion:** “When our new student really needed someone, you were there to help. That’s what compassion is all about.”
- **Persuasiveness:** “You have shown a lot of leadership in our class. Your example pointed others in the right direction.”
- **Wisdom:** “I’ve noticed your effort to make good choices this year. Be sure to keep it up all summer long!”



Making practical applications of truth in daily decisions.

© Copyright 2001 Character Training Institute. May be reproduced for educational use only.



Coloring Fun

Make copies of the picture on the left. Let students color and take home.

Copying guide:

Choose "enlarge"—8.5 x 11 to 11 x 17 (129%) to fill an 8.5 x 11 page.

Be sure to choose the "8.5 x 11" paper source.

Some copiers may require repositioning the page on the copier to copy only the area to be colored.

Teaching Tips

Turning Failure Into Success

Personal stories are great attention-grabbers, but not all stories are about doing things right. Some of the best lessons are found in failure and hearing about the ensuing consequences. Consider if there are any stories from your life that could help students avoid foolish mistakes. If so, your failure might contribute to their success.

Look Ahead

Close this series of character lessons by designating a different character quality for each week of your summer or winter break. Make a special calendar to help students focus on character when they aren't in school.