




# Today Counts™



**Quotation:**  
“Decide on what you think  
is right, and stick to it.”

– George Eliot  
(pen name of Mary Anne  
Evans), English novelist  
and journalist (1819-1880)

**Kindergarten:** How do you know what's right and what's wrong?

**Grade 1:** What helps you do the right thing?

**Grade 2:** Share about a time you made a decision and stuck to it. Was it always  
easy? Why or why not?





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**Activity:**  
**All Grades:** Tell the class that one way they can make good decisions is by eating healthfully. Have them draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper. On the left, they should draw pictures of healthful foods that represent good decisions, and on the right, they should draw pictures of junk foods that represent not-so-good decisions. Discuss which kinds of healthy choices are the best decisions.



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## Story:

The squirrels were all running through the park gathering nuts for the winter when two squirrels grabbed the same nut at the same time.

"It's mine," Squiggly said. "I was here first."

"No, it's mine," Earl said. "I saw it first."

"Let go!"

"You let go!"

The squirrels chattered at each other, but neither wanted to let go. Earl was angry and he didn't want to let Squiggly win, but he also saw that all of the other squirrels were making a lot of progress, gathering nut after nut after nut.

So he made a decision. He let go. "You keep it," he said. "I'll find another one." Right away he saw a big, tasty-looking nut peeking out from behind a fallen leaf.

**Kindergarten:** Was Earl's decision a good one? Why or why not?

**Grade 1:** Why do you think Earl made the decision he made?

**Grade 2:** What do you do when you want something that someone else also wants?

# Today Counts™

**Kindergarten:** What does this proverb mean?

**Grade 1:** What does this proverb have to do with decision-making?

**Grade 2:** Have you ever been torn between “having your cake” and “eating your cake”? What did you do?

**Proverb:**

You cannot have your cake and eat it.



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**Activity:** Imagine you are walking to school one morning. There are some students walking ahead of you, students you know go to your school, but who you don't know personally. Then, you notice a one-dollar bill fall out of one of the students' pockets. Neither the student nor his friends notice.

**Kindergarten:** What would you do? Why did you make this decision?

**Grade 1:** What would you do? Which Pillars of Character helped you make your decision?

**Grade 2:** What would you do? Would your decision be different if the person who dropped the one-dollar bill was a stranger? What if the person who dropped the one-dollar bill was a good friend? Why or why not?



# Today Counts™

**Quotation:**  
"I learn by going where I  
have to go."

— Theodore Roethke,  
poet (1908-1963)



**Kindergarten:** Take a typical day like today: where did you have to go? What did you learn?

**Grade 1:** What does this quotation mean to you?

**Grade 2:** If you only went where you wanted to go, where would you spend your time? What would you learn there? Would this be a good thing?



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**Activity:**

**All Grades:** Divide the students into pairs and have them discuss their answers to the following questions: If you don't brush your teeth every night, you might get cavities, and you'll definitely get scolded by the dentist and have to sit for a long time getting plaque and tarter scraped off of your teeth. Would you rather brush your teeth every night and save yourself the pain? Or would you rather forget about brushing, and suffer at the dentist's office when the time comes? Why? Which of The Six Pillars of Character can help you decide which is the best choice?

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## Story:

Pat and Stanley were two mice who lived in the walls of an apartment building. They had a litter of baby mice that kept them busy looking for food for them all. One day while Stanley was out in the hallway on the third floor, he heard the thumping steps up the stairs. He peeked around a corner and saw... the exterminator!

"See, there's one!" said the exterminator. "I'll take care of these guys. I'll just follow him to their home." Stanley had to make a decision, and quickly, so instead of running for the crack in the floorboard that led to his home, he headed straight for the exterminator. The man tried to step on him, missed, and then Stanley ran on down the stairs, leading the exterminator away from his family. He'd look for a new home, and go back for Pat and the kids later.

**Kindergarten:** What was the quick decision Stanley made? Why do you think he made this decision?

**Grade 1:** Which of The Six Pillars of Character support Stanley's decision?

**Grade 2:** Share about a time you had to make a quick decision. What happened?





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**Kindergarten:** Do you ever hurry? What happens when you hurry?

**Grade 1:** Has this proverb ever been true for you? What did you learn?

**Grade 2:** Is being in a hurry a decision, or does it just happen? What can you do to not be in a hurry?

**Proverb:**

Hurrying does not result in success.

— Swahili proverb



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## Activity:

There is a new student in your class. She is brand new to the school. It is recess, and you and your classmates are all outside playing. You notice the new student sitting alone on the bench with her head down. What would you do?



**Kindergarten:** Have you ever been new to a school or a group? How did you feel as the new person?




**Grade 1:** What would you do, and why?

**Grade 2:** What can we do to make others feel welcome? Which Pillars of Character are we practicing when we do these things?



# Today Counts™



**Quotation:**  
“We can do anything we want as long as we stick to it long enough.”  
– Helen Keller

**Kindergarten:** How does this quotation encourage you?

**Grade 1:** Is there a time when you stuck with something until you achieved it? Share your example.

**Grade 2:** How does this quotation motivate you? Share something you want to stick with until you achieve it.





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**Activity:**

**All Grades:** Think of a positive habit you practice or would like to practice to help you be a better student (e.g., finishing your homework before dinner, doing your homework before watching television, asking an adult or an older sibling for homework help, sharing what you did in school each day with someone, etc.). Draw and color a picture of you practicing this habit. Share your great ideas with the class.

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## Story:

It was a crisp fall day and Mumsy the mama squirrel and her baby, Peepsy, scampered down the grand oak tree where they made their home. It was time for Peepsy to learn to hunt for food.

“I want to teach you how to find the best acorns,” Mumsy said. “You go ahead and find six.”

Peepsy quickly grabbed six acorns scattered on the ground near the old oak tree and brought them to his mama. Mumsy reached slowly for the first acorn. It looked perfect on Peepsy’s little pile, but — when she turned it over — it was only half a shell.

“Look,” she told Peepsy, “It’s empty inside. There’s no meat here!”

She grabbed a second one. It was a bit weathered, but it was in one piece. She cracked it with her teeth, then spat it on the ground.

“Yuck,” she said, “this one is rotten on the inside. Even though it looks okay on the outside, it is rotten.”

She took the third acorn. It was cracked, and bugs already had made a meal off of most of the meat!

“This one is picked over,” she told her baby gently. “There’s not much left for you.”

The fourth one looked the most promising. She snatched it eagerly, only to throw it disappointedly onto the ground. Another animal had been there already, cracked it, and taken the meat.

The fifth shell was looked fresh. She cracked it with her teeth, inspected it, and fed her baby the meat.

“Yummy,” her little one said.

Optimistic, Mumsy grabbed the last acorn at her feet. But again, the top half of the shell looked perfect. When she turned it over, the other half was missing. The meat was gone.

“You see, Peepsy,” she said. “Things are not always what they seem to be at first glance. Take your time to pick your acorns carefully next time.”

**Kindergarten:**  
What did Mumsy teach Peepsy with the six acorns?

**Grade 1:** What could Peepsy do to pick better acorns next time?

**Grade 2:** Have you ever rushed when you should have taken time to plan? What was the result? What would you do differently next time, if anything?



# Today Counts™

**Kindergarten:** What does the word “wise” mean? What does “ignorant” mean? What does this proverb mean to you?

**Grade 1:** How is decision-making different for the wise and the ignorant?

**Grade 2:** What can you learn from this proverb about decision-making?

**Proverb:**

A wise man makes his own decisions, an ignorant man follows the public opinion.

– Chinese Proverb



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## Activity:

You are walking home after school one afternoon when you notice a small ring of students huddled in the corner. Curious, you try to get a better look at what the students are huddling around. You spot a lone student in the center of the ring and you hear their conversation. It's clear that the huddled students are teasing the student in the center. The student in the center has no one to defend him. The students are all too occupied to notice you watching and listening.



**Kindergarten:** What could you do for the student in the center?



**Grade 1:** What would you do?

**Grade 2:** What would you do? Which Pillars of Character would you use in your decision?



# Today Counts™

**Quotation:**

“I hate to see things done by halves. If it be right, do it boldly; if it be wrong, leave it undone.”

– Bernard Gilpin

**Kindergarten:** What does this quotation mean?

**Grade 1:** What does it mean to do things by “halves”? Do you do anything in “halves” that you want to do boldly? Share your example.

**Grade 2:** What do you think would happen if you no longer did things in “halves”? Share your thoughts.





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## Activity:

**All Grades:** Have students stand in a circle. Read a scenario below and gently toss the ball to a student in the circle. The student who catches the ball answers what they would do in the scenario you read out. Repeat a scenario as often as you would like, but make sure each student has a chance to respond to at least one scenario. [Note to teacher: If a student has a negative response, be prepared to give gentle, correcting tips to encourage good character and positive behavior.]

- 1) You are walking by a trash bin with trash littered around it. Do you stop to pick up the trash or do you just keep walking?
- 2) You are walking to class and there is a student on crutches next to you trying to go up the stairs. Do you help the student up the stairs or do you pass the student and go to class?
- 3) It's almost bedtime, you brushed your teeth, and your mom just baked your favorite cookies. Do you wait until the next day to eat the cookie or do you eat the cookie now?
- 4) You see your friend cheat in a game during recess. Do you tell others what you saw or do ignore what you saw and just keep playing?
- 5) The bell rings and it's time to get to class. You see your friend fall in the hallway. Do you help your friend and make sure he is okay or do you go straight to class?

# Today Counts™

## Story:

Poppy the Porcupine and Arielle the Aardvark were the best of friends. They did everything together. When the sun set, the two would go scavenging for dinner. When Arielle would come across an anthill, she would call Poppy and the two would feast. They looked out for each other and helped each other whenever they could.

One early afternoon, Poppy was alone, scouring the woodlands for a snack, when she overheard several of her fellow woodland dwellers. Helia the Hyena and her friends were having a loud conversation, plotting an attack on sweet Arielle (as hyenas often do to their aardvark neighbors). Poppy panicked as she tried to think up the best course of action.

Helia and her friends were a threat to Arielle and the other aardvarks, but also to porcupines, like Poppy. Standing up for her dear friend could prove to be very dangerous for Poppy. However, Poppy could not just watch Helia and her friends hurt Arielle.

After serious thought, Poppy decided what she felt was right. Poppy courageously showed herself to Helia and her friends. She sharply pointed her quills for their attention. When all eyes were on her, Poppy began nervously to reason with Helia. Poppy said how wonderful Arielle was – that Arielle posed no threat to Helia or her friends and that Helia should leave Arielle alone. Then, Poppy felt the intensity of Helia and her friends' attention fix on her. As they crept closer to Poppy, Poppy had to resort to her back-up plan in self-defense. She stiffened her quills once again and rammed herself into Helia. Helia shrieked in pain and stepped away. Helia's friends followed suit. Helia and her friends never again bothered Arielle or Poppy again.

**Kindergarten:** Do you think Poppy is a good decision maker? How do you know?

**Grade 1:** Have you had to stand up for a friend? What was the result?

**Grade 2:** How do you know that Poppy carefully thought through her plan before talking to Helia and the other hyenas? Why is it important to think and plan thoroughly?



# Today Counts™

**Kindergarten:** Do you ever find you have too many choices? How does it make you feel?

**Grade 1:** What does this proverb mean?

**Grade 2:** Are choices a good or bad thing?

**Proverb:**  
He who has a choice  
has trouble.  
— Dutch proverb

April | Week 4 Thursday | Decision-Making

# CHARACTER COUNTS!®



# Today Counts™

**Activity:**  
You promised to go to your friend's dance recital on Saturday when your neighbor invites you to his birthday party on the same day. The birthday party sounds like more fun than the recital.

**Kindergarten:** What would you do? How would your decision make your friend feel?

**Grade 1:** What would you do, and why?

**Grade 2:** What would you do? Which Pillars of Character would influence your decision?