

We make decisions every day, big and little.



1. **Teach decision making skills to children of all ages**, helping them grow up to be independent, responsible, and confident.
2. **Be a good role model.** Your child will learn from watching you make choices.
3. **Start early. Give your young child small choices** between two options, such as picking out what to wear or choosing the vegetable for dinner.
4. **Help your preschooler begin to consider alternatives, make choices** and be responsible for his/her choices.
5. **Learn from mistakes.** Choices always have consequences, and not all are harsh. There is always a valuable lesson to be learned from each one to make better choices.
 - **Example:** *A child who fails to put his or her dirty clothes in the laundry basket.* While a parent might offer a gentle reminder, a child can make the decision to do this or not. And, while it can be tempting for Mom and Dad to pick up the clothes and add them to the laundry basket, there is something to be learned when the child would like to wear a favorite shirt or jeans, but can't because he or she has failed to add it to the laundry.
6. **Practice decision making. Your child won't become a good decision maker overnight.** Talk with your child about decisions you make every day, such as what to wear, what to eat, what to do in the evening. Ask your child to name some of the decisions he/she makes every day.
7. **Stop, Think and Act.** Children often make snap judgments and act on them without thinking. The first step is to teach your child to think before he/she acts.
 - Teach your child to take a short pause and think to avoid making bad choices.
 - Help your child by "catching them in the act," meaning when you see him/her about to do something without thinking, stop him/her and guide them through the decision making process.
 - Because you can't always be there, use times when he/she chooses without thinking (and things don't turn out well) to ask, "What did you learn from this?"
8. **Gaining confidence in making little decisions paves the way for making bigger decisions later.**
9. **Break BIG decisions down.** It can be helpful to break the decision making process into small steps.
 - **Knowing** when a decision needs to be made.
 - **Thinking of possible options.**
 - **Looking** at the options.
 - **Choosing** ways for making the decision.
 - **Reviewing** how it works.

(Turn page over to begin steps to decision making and problem solving)

Use the POOCH Plan

The POOCH Plan is one way of working through problems to come to a decision:

Problem
Options
Outcomes
Choice
How did it go?



Step 1.

What is the **problem**?

Step 2.

Think of as many **options** as you can.

Step 3.

Decide what the **outcomes or consequences** of each option are.

Step 4.

Make a **choice** and **take responsibility for your decision**.

Step 5.

How did it go? Look at what happened. Was it a good decision?

<http://www.fulhmgdnps.sa.edu.au/docs/policies/pooch.pdf>

For more information on helping your child build good decision making skills, go to:

- *Fun Activities to Teach Children About Decision Making Skills:*
<http://mom.me/parenting/4887-fun-activities-teach-children-about-decision-making-skills/>
- <http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/families/about-behaviour/making-decisions/learning-make-good-decisions-and-solve-problems>

We're here to help. To learn more about UIC-Specialized Care for Children's programs and services, check out our website at:

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