



## Using Choice at Home: A Step-by-Step Guide for Families

### What is choice?

Offering choice is a strategy in which a person (in this case a caregiver) offers their child two or more options for an activity or setting. As adults make so many of the decisions affecting children, offering choice gives children some control over the activities they do during the day within the family schedule. Choice is used to promote decision-making and other self-determined behaviors. Offering choice can be done for many activities such as helping make the family menu, deciding on which game to play, or which path to take when on a walk. Offering choice prevents problems as all choices offered should be acceptable to the family.

### How do I use this strategy at home?

In the table below, we provide the steps for how to get started with choice at home. Following the steps are two examples, one for younger children and one for older youth.

Step	Description
Step 1	Determine what types of choices you would feel comfortable offering to your child during various settings or activities throughout the day and create a menu of choices.
Step 2	Use the menu to select the choices to offer each day.
Step 3	After you have made your “choice menu,” offer these choices to your child during the identified setting or activity.
Step 4	Ask your child to make their choice.
Step 5	Provide wait time for your child to select their choice.
Step 6	Listen to (or observe) your child’s response.
Step 7	Remind your child to make a choice from one of the available options if they have not made a choice within the time you gave them.
Step 8	Praise whatever choice your child makes and provide them with the option they chose.
Step 9	Offer your child a chance to give feedback on the choice they made.

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For additional information see:

Lane, K. L., Menzies, H. M., Ennis, R. P., & Oakes, W. P. (2015). Supporting behavior for school success: A step-by-step guide to key strategies. New York, NY: Guilford Press.



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### Example. With my elementary-age child ....

**Step 1.** Jessie was adjusting to a new routine during the week without school in session. His mom noticed he was resistant to doing reading and writing schoolwork during the morning school block in their new family schedule. She decided to offer him choices of activities. For example, he could practice writing using a paper journal and pen or create an electronic journal. To practice reading, he could choose a new book from the online [free access library](#)\* or reread a favorite book from his shelf.

**Step 2.** His mom created a [tic-tac-toe board](#) of options for him to choose from each day. She created one board for writing and one for reading. She also included a free choice writing and reading activity in the middle square of each board. In the free choice option, he could choose his own activity as long as he was using writing and reading skills.

**Step 3.** The next morning during the schoolwork time in the schedule, Jessie's mom showed him the tic-tac-toe choice board and explained that he could choose one activity at a time from each board and then mark it off with an X. When he completed the activities for 'three in a row' he would share it with his mom and they could celebrate (kitchen dance party, taking a walk together, or playing a game).

**Step 4.** The materials for all choices on the board were available in case they were selected. Because of Jessie's age, his mother logged into any websites that might be needed. Then she asked Jessie to make the first choice.

**Step 5.** He took a few minutes to decide his first choice. But he decided to start a paper journal.

**Step 6.** His mom listened to his choice and watched as he marked it with an X on the writing tic-tac-toe board. He asked if he could illustrate his writing when he was finished. He and his mom decided that would be a great way to celebrate after he completed 'three in a row' that day.

**Step 7.** Jessie's mom reminded him to make 2 more choices on the board for 'three in a row.'

**Step 8.** Jessie's mom acknowledged his choice by saying, "You made your first choice! Enjoy your journal writing." The materials were ready, and Jessie knew how to begin.

**Step 9.** At the end of the first week, Jessie's mom asked him if he enjoyed making choices for reading and writing practice. Jessie said, "I like having different choices each day!"

*\*The Oxford University Press requires free registration for access to online books.*



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### Example. With my middle or high school child ...

**Step 1.** Kari's parents, Kim and Chris, were appreciative their child's middle school principal shared the school's plan for continuous learning. They received a hotspot and a laptop, with plans to provide three hours daily, Monday through Friday, for online learning experiences. Chris decided to build choices into Kari's day to prevent any challenges from occurring and help Kari enjoy the rest of her day. Kim started by thinking about which types of choices she felt comfortable offering (e.g., during morning routines, leisure time, and family time). Kim made a menu of these choices.

**Step 2.** Next, Kim reviewed the schedule she and Chris built with Kari. They used the menu to make a list of choices for a few activities in the week ahead. For example, during Kari's "hang out" time with friends she offered the choice of going for a walk (6 feet apart) or making a lip sync challenge with her friends using remote technology.

**Step 3.** After Kim made the "choice menu," she shared the "hang out" choices with Kari while they ate lunch. Later that night, during family time, she offered Kari choice of which board game to play after dinner.

**Step 4.** After lunch, Kim asked Kari which of these options she would like to do to enjoy time with her friend, Maggie.

**Step 5.** Kari had been enjoying the walks with Maggie, but decided to give Maggie a call to see if she wanted to make a lip sync video together on Zoom. Kim gave Kari a few minutes to touch base with Maggie to see if she wanted to make the video.

**Step 6.** Kim smiled as she overheard their conversation (they thought the lip sync video would be hilarious).

**Step 7.** No prompting was necessary, as Kari make the choice right away.

**Step 8.** Kim simply said, "that was a fast choice!" She was careful not to say, "I knew you would pick that!" because she did not want to give Kari the impression that she should try to make a choice to please her mom. Kim reminded Kari about some old props (e.g., microphones and costumes) they had left over from one Halloween. Kim checked some emails while Kari and Maggie picked out a song from the 'clean rap' playlist.

**Step 9.** Later that night, Kim and Chris asked to see the video and asked Kari if she had fun. She said she did and showed them the video.