

Using the S.T.A.R. Strategy for Making Big Decisions

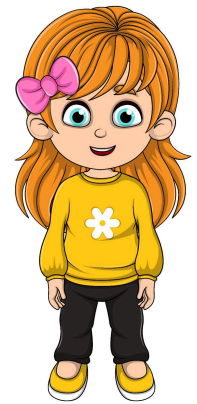
Lesson Objective:

Students will practice using the S.T.A.R. strategy (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect) to make thoughtful decisions when faced with big choices. They will apply this strategy to a variety of scenarios, strengthening their decision-making and problem-solving skills.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Book 3 Chapter 5 “Harriet Learns About Making Big Decisions with the S.T.A.R. Strategy”
- Pencils and markers
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Activity 1: Scenarios
- Activity 2: S.T.A.R. Decision Tree worksheet
- Home Connection Letter



Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Begin with a brief discussion (topic of lesson).

Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

1. Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

- "Good morning, class! Today, we're going to talk about using the S.T.A.R. strategy for big decisions. You all know the S.T.A.R. strategy—Stop, Think, Act, Reflect—and we've used it before to solve small problems. But sometimes we face bigger decisions that take more thought. Today, we'll practice using the S.T.A.R. strategy for those bigger choices."

2. Discussion Starter

- "Can anyone think of a time when you had to make a big decision? Maybe it was choosing what to do for a school project or deciding how to spend your birthday money."
- Let students share their experiences briefly.
- "Today, we're going to read a story about Harriet and her friends making a big decision together. Let's see how they use the S.T.A.R. strategy to help them make a choice."

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Book 3 Chapter 5 aloud. Pause at key moments to engage students and make sure they are following the story.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

Story Time Teacher Script:

1. Prepare the Students for the Story:

- "We're going to read a story called Harriet Learns About Making Big Decisions with the S.T.A.R. Strategy. As we read, I want you to think about how Harriet and her friends use each step of the strategy to make their decision."
- (Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

2. Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments:

- **While reading**, pause during key moments.
- **Ask Questions:**
 - What is the big decision Harriet and her friends have to make?
Discuss the choice between the school play, the garden, and the recycling program.
 - Why do they feel overwhelmed by the decision?
Talk about how all the options seem fun but come with responsibilities.
 - What is the first step in the S.T.A.R. strategy that Ollie reminds them of?
Focus on how stopping helps them calm down.
 - What does the group do during the "Think" step?
Explore how they list the pros and cons of each choice.

- What are some of the pros of choosing the school play?
Highlight the fun and creativity involved in the play.
- What are the responsibilities of starting a garden?
Discuss the effort needed to care for plants and plan the garden.
- Why do some of the friends lean toward the recycling program?
Focus on the long-term impact of the recycling program.
- What is Harriet's suggestion during the "Act" step?
Talk about how Harriet feels confident that the recycling program is the best option.
- Why do they decide the recycling program is the best choice?
Discuss how the group considers the consequences of each option.
- What is the importance of the "Reflect" step in the S.T.A.R. strategy?
Explore how reflecting helps them evaluate if they made the right choice.

Book 3 Chapter 5: Harriet Learns About Making Big Decisions with the S.T.A.R. Strategy

It was a crisp autumn afternoon, and Harriet and her friends gathered around the playground, excited to talk about an important decision they each had to make. Their teacher had just announced that the class could choose one big project to work on for the rest of the school year. There were three options: organizing a school play, starting a garden, or setting up a recycling program. Each project was fun but also came with responsibilities, and Harriet could tell that everyone was feeling a little overwhelmed.

"I don't know what to choose!" Harriet exclaimed. "I love the idea of a play, but I also think a garden would be fun to work on."

Buzz buzzed nervously. "Yeah, but the recycling program could make a big difference for the whole school. I just can't decide."

Bennie nodded. "This is a bigger decision than we usually have to make."

Sammy, who always liked to think things through, suggested, "Maybe we should use the S.T.A.R. strategy to help us figure it out."

Harriet brightened at the suggestion. "That's a great idea! Let's Stop and take a moment to think before we get more stressed out."

The group all took a deep breath, following the first step of the S.T.A.R. strategy— Stop—giving themselves a moment to pause and clear their heads.

"Okay, now that we've stopped," Ollie said, "let's move to the next step: Think. We need to think about all of our options and what each choice would mean for us."

Harriet nodded. "Right. Let's think about what it would be like to work on each project. If we choose the school play, we'll have to practice a lot and work together to put on a big performance."

"And we'd have to decide who plays which parts," Buzz added. "That could be a lot of fun, but it might also cause disagreements."

"True," Ollie said. "Now let's think about the garden. It would be fun to plant things and watch them grow, but it would also take a lot of work. We'd need to water the plants and make sure they grow properly."

Sammy jumped in. "And we'd have to plan for what to plant and how to take care of the garden. It could teach us about patience and responsibility, but it might be tricky to manage it all."

Betty added, "And the recycling program would help the whole school. But we'd need to get everyone involved and keep track of how well we're doing with collecting and sorting the recycling."

"All of the options have their pros and cons," Bennie said. "We really need to think about what we're willing to commit to and how each project will affect us and our classmates."

Harriet took a deep breath, realizing that this decision was bigger than she'd first thought. "So, what's next? How do we decide?"

"That's where the Act step comes in," Ollie explained. "After thinking through everything, we'll choose the best option and try it out."

Harriet thought about it. "Well, I think I'd enjoy the garden because I love nature, but I also want to help the school in a bigger way. The recycling program seems like something that would make a real difference for everyone."

Buzz buzzed in agreement. "Me too! I think the recycling program is a good idea. It's a big responsibility, but it could help the school for a long time."

"But what about the play?" Bennie asked. "That sounds really fun, and we'd all get to perform together."

Harriet felt torn between the choices. She knew this was a big decision, but she also remembered what Grandma had told them about their brains making predictions. Their brains were trying to predict how they'd feel about each project based on what they knew about themselves and their past experiences. The important thing now was to think about the consequences of each choice.

"Let's think about the consequences of each option," Harriet suggested. "If we choose the play, we'll have a lot of fun rehearsing, but it'll be a short-term project. After we perform, it'll be over."

"Good point," Ollie said. "And if we choose the garden, it'll take a lot of time and effort, but we could enjoy the plants for months. Plus, we'll learn a lot about taking care of something."

"And the recycling program would be ongoing," Sammy added. "It would take a lot of work to set up, but it could keep helping the school for years."

Harriet thought carefully about the consequences. She realized that the play might be fun, but it wouldn't last as long as the garden or the recycling program. The garden would be rewarding, but it would need constant care. The recycling program, though challenging, could make the biggest impact on the school.

"I think we should choose the recycling program," Harriet said finally. "It's a big responsibility, but it would make a real difference, and it's something we can keep improving over time."

The others nodded, agreeing that the recycling program seemed like the best choice.

"Great," Ollie said. "Now that we've made our choice, let's move to the last step: Reflect. After we start the program, we can reflect on how things are going and adjust if we need to." Harriet smiled, feeling confident about their decision. "I think we made the right choice by thinking through everything carefully."

Grandma, who had been listening from nearby, walked over with a proud smile. "You all did a wonderful job using the S.T.A.R. strategy for this big decision. Bigger choices take more thought, but by stopping, thinking, acting, and reflecting, you've come up with a solution that works for everyone and benefits the school."

Harriet felt proud of what they had accomplished. "Thanks, Grandma. We've learned that the S.T.A.R. strategy doesn't just work for small problems—it helps us make better decisions with bigger choices too."

"And remember," Grandma said, "your brain is always making predictions about how things will turn out. By thinking carefully about the consequences, you're helping your brain make better predictions and choose the best path."

As they walked back to class, Harriet and her friends felt confident in their decision to start the recycling program. They knew it would be a big responsibility, but they were ready for the

challenge. And with the S.T.A.R. strategy in their toolbox, they knew they could tackle any decision—big or small—that came their way.

From that day forward, whenever Harriet faced a tough decision, she remembered to stop, think, act, and reflect. She knew that by taking the time to think things through, she could make responsible choices that would lead to positive outcomes. And she felt ready to take on whatever life threw her way.

3. Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “Harriet and her friends faced a tough choice today—and just like in real life, making big decisions isn’t always easy. But by using the S.T.A.R. strategy—Stop, Think, Act, and Reflect—they were able to slow down, carefully consider their options, and choose something that made a lasting impact. This story shows us that when we take the time to think through our choices, especially the big ones, we help our brains make better predictions and we feel more confident in the decisions we make. Whether it’s picking a school project, solving a disagreement, or choosing how to spend our time, the S.T.A.R. strategy helps us stay calm, respectful, and thoughtful every step of the way.”

4. Post-Chapter Questions

Ask these questions to help students reflect on the chapter and connect it to their own experiences:

- How is making a big decision different from solving a small conflict?
Encourages students to reflect on the added responsibility and thought required in bigger choices.
- Why is it important to consider consequences before making a decision?
Promotes forward-thinking and decision-making based on long-term outcomes.
- What might have happened if the group chose quickly without using the S.T.A.R. strategy?
Reinforces the value of slowing down and thinking carefully.
- How did using the S.T.A.R. strategy help the group stay respectful of each other’s opinions?
Highlights empathy and collaborative decision-making.

- What do you think made the recycling program feel like the most meaningful choice to the group?
Prompts students to consider the impact and purpose in decision-making.
- Have you ever had to make a big decision like this? What helped you decide?
Connects the story to students' personal experiences.
- What does it mean when Grandma says our brains make predictions about how things will turn out?
Encourages metacognition and understanding how past experiences influence choices.
- Why is it helpful to reflect *after* a decision is made, even if the choice seemed right?
Emphasizes learning and adjustment as part of good decision-making.
- What would you do if your group chose a project and it didn't go as planned?
Promotes flexibility and problem-solving even after a decision is made.
- How can the S.T.A.R. strategy help you in situations outside of school, like at home or in your community?
Reinforces the transferability of the strategy to real-life challenges.

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will practice using the S.T.A.R. Strategy to make big decisions

Please choose from the following 2 activities:

Activity 1: Decision-Making Role Play (15 minutes)

1. Introduce Activity

"Now that we've seen how Harriet and her friends used the S.T.A.R. strategy for a big decision, let's practice making our own big decisions using the same steps. I'm going to give you some situations, and in groups, you'll work through the decision using the S.T.A.R. strategy."

2. Activity Instructions

- Divide students into small groups.
- Assign each group a scenario (see examples below).
- Each group will:
 - **Stop** and calm down.
 - **Think** by discussing their options and the consequences.
 - **Act** by choosing the best solution.
 - **Reflect** on how the decision worked out.

Scenarios for Decision-Making Role Play:

1. Deciding whether to spend your allowance on a new toy or save it for a bigger purchase.
2. Choosing between joining the soccer team or the art club after school.
3. Deciding whether to stay home and rest or go to a friend's birthday party when feeling tired.
4. Choosing between spending the weekend doing homework early or playing video games and doing homework later.
5. Deciding which book to read for a book report when you like several different ones.



- After each group role-plays their decision, ask:
 - "How did you use the S.T.A.R. strategy?"
 - "What solution did you come up with, and how did you feel about the decision?"

Activity 2: S.T.A.R. Decision Tree (15 minutes)

1. Introduce Activity

"Now we're going to make a decision tree using the S.T.A.R. strategy. A decision tree helps you think through your options and the consequences. You'll choose a decision you've made recently or one you're thinking about making and walk through the S.T.A.R. steps."

2. Activity Instructions

- Hand out S.T.A.R. Decision Tree templates.
- Students will choose a big decision they've had to make (e.g., what to do over the weekend, which extracurricular activity to join).
- On the sheet, they will:
 - Stop: What is the decision they need to make?
 - Think: What are the different options? What are the pros and cons of each?
 - Act: Which choice did they make or are thinking of making?
 - Reflect: How did it turn out, or how do they think it will turn out?

Discussion:

- After students complete their decision trees, ask a few volunteers to share.

"How did the S.T.A.R. strategy help you think through the big decision?"

Wrapping it Up

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

1. Review and Reflection Overview:

- After students complete their reflections, invite volunteers to share what they learned from their reflections.
- Encourage students to continue using the strategy in their daily lives

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

1. Gather in a Circle for Reflection:

- "Let's all come back together in a circle."



2. Closing

- "Today, we practiced using the S.T.A.R. strategy to help us make big decisions. Remember, big decisions take more time and thought, and by using the S.T.A.R. strategy, you can make sure you're thinking through all the consequences and making the best choice."
- "Let's each share one way the S.T.A.R. strategy can help us when we're facing a big decision. Who would like to start?"

Home Connection Letter

1. Sending Information Home:

- "Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. What we learned today in class."
- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today, your child practiced using the S.T.A.R. strategy to make big decisions. We read a story called *Harriet Learns About Making Big Decisions with the S.T.A.R. Strategy*, where Harriet and her friends used the strategy to choose a big project for their class. The S.T.A.R. strategy stands for Stop, Think, Act, Reflect, and it helps children take the time to make thoughtful decisions.



In class, your child:

- Role-played scenarios where they had to make a big decision using the S.T.A.R. strategy.
- Created a decision tree to think through a recent or upcoming decision.
- Discussed how this strategy helps them weigh options and consequences before acting.

We encourage you to ask your child about the S.T.A.R. strategy and how they might use it when they have to make big decisions at home or at school.

With Gratitude,

Deciding whether to spend your allowance on a new toy or save it for a bigger purchase.

Choosing between joining the soccer team or the art club after school.

Deciding whether to stay home and rest or go to a friend's birthday party when feeling tired.

Choosing between spending the weekend doing homework early or playing video games and doing homework later.

Deciding which book to read for a book report when you like several different ones.

S.T.A.R. Decision Tree

STOP: What is the decision I must make?



Think: What are my options?



Option 1

Pros

Cons



Option 2

Pros

Cons



Option 3

Pros

Cons

Act: Which option will I choose?

**Reflect: How did it go?
Should I repeat this choice
again?**