

# Making Good Decisions

Real World Ecosystems  
Activity  
Grade Level: 5-8



## Main Objectives

This activity will utilize personal thoughts and points of view to construct meaning and knowledge through taking on the role of another person.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this activity, learners will:

- Be able to understand the complex nature of making decisions regarding the environment
- Become aware of different view points
- Become aware of the multiple stakeholders who are involved in the decision-making process.
- Understand how science plays a role in making decisions

## Length of Activity

1.5 hours

## Materials List

Making Good Decisions Backgrounder  
Making Good Decisions Learner Worksheet  
A tag for each learner with learner role and a number  
Large sheets of chart paper  
Marker  
Tape for hanging charts

## Procedure

### Step 1: Backgrounder

- a. Provide the learners with copies of the Making Good Decisions Backgrounder. Allow the class to read the backgrounder individually or in groups.

- b. As learners are finishing up their reading, be sure to remind them to discuss amongst themselves the “Think About” questions at the end of the backgrounder.

### Step 2: Pesticides and Herbicides

- a. After learners finish reading their backgrounders, give each learner a sticky-back label. The label will state their community role and a number. The number will determine whether they are (1) opposed, (2) undecided, or (3) not in favour of banning pesticides and herbicides (see role-play characters on the learner worksheet).
- b. Each learner should put the tag on their shirt. Try to hand out an equal number of characters and numbers in each of the three categories.
- c. Explain to the learners that today they will be discussing the issue of using pesticides and herbicides in their community.
- d. Next, use a large piece of chart paper and draw an outline of a person. Write on the outside “What could I do about the issue of pesticides and herbicides?” and “Why should I care about the issue of pesticides and herbicides?” on the inside of the outlined person.
- e. During the first half of the class, have a discussion about environmental responsibility. Ask learners why they should

care about pesticides and herbicides. Ask learners what they can do about the issue. Record ideas in the appropriate places on the chart paper. This will help learners remember what has been said in the discussion.

- f. Be sure to leave the chart(s) posted throughout the duration of the activity.
- g. Hint: What have learners heard in the news? Have they seen any signs with advertisements or with information about recent chemical spraying?

### Step 3: Character Profile

- a. In the second half of the class, have learners work on their character profiles. Divide them into groups of 5-6 learners. The learner worksheet will help guide them.
- b. Explain that they will be playing the role of their assigned character in the next class and that they must research the background information that such a community character would have. Learners have been given a bit of information about some character types, (see the learner worksheet), but they will have to determine the rest by thinking and discussing matters within their own group.
- c. Next, learners working in their small groups will play the role as their assigned character rather than expressing their personal views. In each group, have one learner act as the recorder and one act as the reporter. The question is, "Should the cosmetic use of pesticides and herbicides be banned?" Write the question on the chalkboard to keep the class focused.

### Step 4: Conclusion

- a. Have one representative from each group present the group's conclusions. One representative will present their information from each group. Each group should have 10 minutes to present.
- b. After all groups have been heard from, debrief the activity, allowing learners a chance to discuss or comment about the information presented.
- c. Discuss why making these decisions is complicated and how there are so many

different views from stakeholders.

- d. Ask the learners if their opinions about pesticides have changed throughout the exercise. Go back to the chart paper and ask the learners if anything should be added.

### Tips and Extensions

- Once you have determined the number of groups to be in the class, you may wish to use a different colour of ink to represent members of each different group, or to use a different label colour for each group.
- For best success and ease of management in building groups, do not explain in advance what the colours represent!
- Once the learners have picked up their tags and joined their groups, the educator should record the names and roles of learners and to which group each belongs.
- Have learners write their local MLA or other government department about the use of pesticides or herbicides in their community.
- CTV: Go to the web and listen to the program W-Five called "The Perfect Potato."
- Research the health warnings and possible effects on specific harmful chemicals.
- Have learners investigate the different hazardous symbols listed on cleaners in their homes. Ask the learners to record the type of cleaner, any hazardous symbols and their interpretation. Then assign learners to research alternatives to that cleaner or chemical.
- Have learners research more about Dr. June Irwin of Hudson. How did she improve testing for harmful chemicals? How did she use science to create change?
- Have learners create a mind map of their points of view in their groups.

### Comprehension

You may wish to test learners' comprehension with the following prompts and questions:

- Why do view points differ so much? Try to account for the differences in view points.
- What are some reasons that make banning pesticide use so difficult?
- How did science contribute to the discussion?