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## CHOICES CARDS

**Grades:** 5 and up

**Time:** 10-45 minutes, depending upon the number of cards and the approach to analysis

**Materials:** Cardboard or poster board (scraps are available free from most frame shops)

**Relevant Subjects:** Social Studies, and, with modifications, Science, Health, and Mathematics

**Preparation:** To create choices cards, simply consider two related behaviors or products and write one on one side of a piece cardboard/poster board and the other on the reverse. Here are some ideas for cards:

### Human Rights:

- shirt from cheap chain store/shirt produced by union workers
- conventional hot chocolate/fair-trade hot chocolate
- Rugmart rug/imported rug without the Rugmart (or similar) label
- volunteering at food pantry/hanging out at the mall
- giving 10% of your allowance to charity/keeping it all
- feeling prejudice/acting on prejudice

### Environmental Preservation:

- bottled water/tap water
- hamburger/veggie burger
- disposable diapers/cloth diapers
- organic food/conventional food
- station wagon/SUV
- hybrid car/conventional car
- biking/driving
- buying used clothing/buying new clothing

## Animal Protection:

- Cirque de Soleil/Ringling Bros. Circus
- Tom's of Maine toothpaste/Crest toothpaste
- KFC/spaghetti and tomato sauce
- buying a dog/adopting a dog from the shelter
- sport hunting/photographing wildlife
- leather shoes/canvas or hemp shoes
- soy or rice milk/cow's milk

These are just a few examples of choices cards you could make. Use your imagination! The answer to which choice harms less and helps more is sometimes obvious, but some choices cards require knowledge and explanation (e.g., “fair-trade,” a term applied to products that are produced using fair labor practices; “Rugmart,” a label that assures no child or slave labor in the production of the rug; or “Cirque de Soleil,” a circus that relies solely upon human performers, not on animal acts).

1. **Short version:** If you don't have much time, you can hold the card in front of the class and read both sides aloud (or ask a student volunteer to do this). Ask the students to determine which choice harms less and helps more, and why. If they don't know, provide background information to enable them to evaluate the choice. Encourage complex thinking and multiple perspectives. For example, some choices may harm one group less but another more.

**Long version:** Hand out stacks of choices cards to groups of four to five students and ask the groups to discuss their cards and determine which of the two choices on each card harms less and helps more. Ask each group to pick a reporter who will share a couple of the choices with the entire class. Move around from group to group to help explain background information about the choices. Alternatively, give students the opportunity to research information to make decisions about the choices.

2. Invite students to consider what choices they would be willing to make in their own lives to cause more good and less harm to other people, other species, and the ecosystem.

**Alternative:** Another option for this activity is to actually bring in objects rather than rely upon the cards. For example, you could bring in an apple labeled with an “organically grown” sticker and a conventional apple or a chocolate bar with a fair-trade wrapper and a more commonly available chocolate bar.

## Activity from *The Power and Promise of Humane Education*