

Why Do We Vote?

Read this page, and then use these scenarios to work through the idea of voting with your child. If you aren't working with two children, you can use yourself as the second actor. You can vary the details of the scenarios to make them work for your students. Our kids won't disagree or agree over the same things. So, below are examples, but here are the outcomes you need:

1. The children agree.
2. The children disagree but both can have what they want.
3. The children disagree and cannot both have what they want.
4. Hypothetical majority/minority of a larger sample.

Scenario One: Benny and Sadie, I want you guys to make a choice for me. You need to choose between cleaning the toilets and going to the beach. What do you choose? (They both choose the beach) You both voted for the beach, so the beach it is! How do you both feel? (They each feel great.)

Scenario Two: Benny and Sadie, I want you each to tell me what you would like for dinner. (The children say what they'd like.) Benny, you voted for pizza. Sadie, you voted for pasta. In this case, you can both have what you'd like. How do you each feel? (They each feel great.)

Scenario Three: Benny and Sadie, I want you to choose what color we're going to paint the hallway. We can only choose one color. How do you vote? (Benny votes purple, Sadie votes pink.) Benny, you voted for purple, and Sadie, you voted for pink. It is a tie: one vote purple, one vote pink. How are we going to decide? (Lead them to the answer that they need to expand the number of people voting, and then expand it until you have a majority and minority.) That makes three votes for purple, and one vote for pink. Purple wins. (At this point, the "losing" child will probably get irritated, and that is fine. That is part of the lesson.) Benny, you were in the majority. How do you feel? (Great.) Sadie, you were in the minority. How do you feel? (Bad.)

Scenario Four: Now, what if there are ten kids at camp, and they are trying to decide whether to go climb a mountain or swim in a lake. How can they decide? (Vote.) What if there are eight kids who want to climb, and two kids who want to swim? Who is in the majority, with more votes? Who is in the minority, with fewer votes? So what will the children do? How do the climbers feel? How do the swimmers feel? How do the swimmers feel about the climbers? Is it fair to do what the majority wants? How could the children accomplish the voting to make it so that no kid was mad at any other kid? (Hopefully work around to the reasons behind a secret ballot.)

Challenge Questions:

1. Is voting a good way to make decisions?
2. Are there other ways to make decisions when people disagree?
3. Is voting fair?
4. What can make it more fair?
5. What happens if one kid votes for climbing even though he really wants to swim, because he's afraid of one of the kids who wants to climb?