

Competing Responsibilities

Grade Level: 7-12
Time: One Class Period

Objectives

- Learn about intellectual tools that assist in making decisions about responsibilities
- Evaluate competing responsibilities to make a defensible choice

Curricular Connections: Language Arts, Civics

Materials: [Intellectual Chart for Deciding Among Responsibilities](http://www.publicachievement.org/Lessons/CompletingResponsibilities.pdf)
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Procedure:

- 1) Review with students how to identify responsibilities and their sources and how to identify rewards/punishments/consequences involved. Then discuss with them these six categories that will help them make a decision between conflicting responsibilities (you can give examples and have them talk about times when they have considered that category before making a decision):
 - a. Urgency: Which is more urgent?
 - b. Relative Importance: How important is each responsibility when compared to the other?
 - c. Time Required: How much time is required to fulfill each responsibility?
 - d. Resources: Do you have the necessary resources—time, money, equipment, skill?
 - e. Competing Values and Interests: What are your other interests and values? Are they consistent with the responsibilities?
 - f. Alternative Solutions or Compromises: Can you do both—accomplishing them in a different way than originally presented?
- 2) Next they will apply these ideas to a decision (note that not all of them will be applicable to every conflict). Here is one scenario students could consider, but you could certainly take an example that was real to them: A high school senior worked at her server job last night and expected to make \$40 in tips as she usually did. However, the bad weather kept the customers away, and she left with \$10 (leaving her with \$75 total). On top of that, she decided she wanted to go to the prom after all and those tickets were \$50 (and tomorrow was the deadline). She is feeling conflicted because she promised her friend she would loan her \$100 to get her car fixed (and it was set to be finished tomorrow). Her friend gave her rides quite often, which she appreciated, but she also didn't want to miss her senior prom. What should she do? Use the [Intellectual Chart for Deciding Among Responsibilities](http://www.publicachievement.org/Lessons/CompletingResponsibilities.pdf) to help you advise her about her decision.

Reflection:

1. What values did you consider to be the highest priority?
2. Why might someone else with the same information arrive at a different conclusion?

Extension Ideas:

1. Find an article where a person faced competing responsibilities; consider the chart; and share whether or not you would have arrived at the same decision.
2. Work with a small group of classmates to perform a skit in which the characters face competing responsibilities, values, and interests, and have limited resources. Ask the audience how they would have dealt with the situation.

Assessment: Review the completed charts.

Adapted from: Foundation of Democracy: Authority, Privacy, Responsibility, and Justice, Center for Civic Education, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice.