

Story Choices (Branching)

40 minutes

Hands-On Logic Challenges

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Get ready to explore the world of interactive storytelling! You'll learn how choices shape narratives by creating your own branching adventure. Follow step-by-step guidance to design a story with multiple paths and endings, just like a video game.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Understand the concept of branching logic in interactive storytelling.
- Apply 'if...then...else...' logic to create decision points in a narrative.
- Design a branching narrative with multiple paths and endings.
- Identify and debug errors in a story program to ensure smooth flow.
- Recognise the connection between interactive stories and basic programming principles.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- This is an unplugged lesson: no devices needed. Have a good stack of index cards ready for each group.
- Prepare board space for a tree diagram and a flowchart, and have the two-door opening scene ready to write up.
- Decide your groupings in advance so the story-building and later card-swapping run without a scramble.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Introduction

Video Games and Choices

Visualising Branching Logic

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Debugging the Narrative

The Grand Finale: Sharing Our Stories

TEACHING MOVES

- 2. Video Games and Choices. Pull real examples from the class. Push past naming a game to what actually changes when they choose left over right, so choice becomes the anchor for everything that follows.
- 3. Visualising Branching Logic. Draw the tree as you talk, labelling START, Choice A and Choice B live. Say the if...then...else... sentence aloud while pointing to each branch so the words map onto the picture.
- 4. Visualising Branching Logic. Write the two-door opening, then hand the choosing to the class while you narrate. Draw the flowchart as each choice is made so pupils see the path being built card by card.
- 5. Visualising Branching Logic. Before groups write, model one finished card showing all four parts: number, story text, decision, go-to. A missing go-to is the fault that breaks a whole story later.
- 6. Debugging the Narrative. Insist the debugging group follow the instructions blindly, exactly as written, with no guessing. That is how they surface a card that points nowhere, which is the point of the swap.
- 7. The Grand Finale: Sharing Our Stories. Split the performance into reader and navigator so the class sees code being read and the path being followed as two separate jobs. Use the discussion questions to name why numbering matters.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Pupils write a decision but forget the go-to instructions, so a choice leads nowhere. Show that a choice without a destination is a dead end. Have them trace their own story finger-on-card before swapping.
- Pupils assume a reader will 'just know' which card comes next, the way they know their own story. Use the blind debugging step to prove otherwise. The debugger can only follow what is written, not what was meant.
- Both branches quietly merge back into one path, so the choice makes no real difference. Point at the tree diagram: two branches, two different next cards. Ask what actually changes if the player picks A instead of B.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Give a partly started card with the number and go-to spaces already labelled, so they only supply the story and the choice. Pair them with a partner and have them talk the story out loud before writing anything down.
- Developing: Ask them to trace their own cards start to finish before the swap, checking every go-to lands on a real card number. Prompt them to add a second real ending so both paths matter.
- Proficient: Challenge them to build a path that loops back or offers three choices instead of two, keeping every go-to correct. Have them explain their branching structure back to you using the if...then...else... wording.