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elementary  
curriculum

# Courage



# SECTION 1 Introduce Courage

This curriculum offers approximately 3 hours of instruction, divided into 3 sections. Each section can be broken into smaller pieces if you prefer short lessons. For additional resources, visit [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).

## 3 WAYS TO BUILD COURAGE:

### Educate

Focus on courage for a period of time. Use the lessons in this curriculum to talk about courage and why it matters. Look for ways to emphasize courage during other subjects, such as reading, history, social studies, health, and athletics.

### Evaluate

Think about daily decisions in the light of good character. Ask yourself and your students, "Is this the right thing to do?" Use the "I Wills" on page 4 as behavioral objectives, and refer to these standards when correcting negative attitudes and behavior.

### Celebrate

Catch people doing good and point out the character qualities they demonstrated. Children thrive on sincere encouragement, so don't overlook the little opportunities to praise each day!

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877.357.0001  
Printed in the U.S.A.  
Item: 4207

## DEFINE COURAGE (Discussion, 15 minutes)

**Point out and discuss key words in the definition. Review and commit the definition to memory. Use the Courage Character Card (sold separately) to remind or reward students who learn the definition.**

**Definition:** *Overcoming fear so I can do what is right*

Courage comes from the Latin word *cor*, which means "heart." A courageous person "takes heart" when things look hopeless. Instead of shrinking back when you are afraid, courage means overcoming your fear so you can do what is right.

Courage begins by knowing what is good, true, and right. This gives you confidence that you are heading in the right direction. When you face a problem, ask yourself, "What is the right thing to do...and why?" This will help you know why you believe something must be done.

Another way to build courage is to think through what you should do in specific situations. For example, what should you do if you wake up and hear a smoke alarm in your home? What should you do if a stranger asks you to get into his car? What should you do if you see someone being teased or bullied?

Thinking ahead will help you overcome fear and make better choices when you face strange, difficult, or frightening situations.

### Related concepts:

boldness, bravery, fortitude, valor, confidence, resolve, hope, purpose, strength

### Discussion:

- Why do you think courage is important?
- Share an example of someone who showed courage in a story or movie.
- Think of something that frightened you when you were younger, but now you are not afraid of it. Why are you no longer afraid?
- What is the opposite of courage? (being cowardly, fainthearted, fearful)



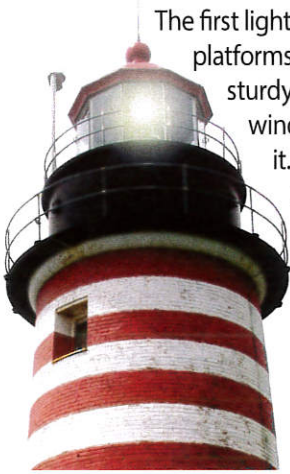
*You can be an "everyday hero" by standing up for what is right and helping those in need.*

**"Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point." —C. S. Lewis**

## SHINE A LIGHT (Exploration, 15 minutes)

Use lighthouse pictures to encourage students to “shine a light” for others. This can also become a research prompt.

Lighthouses come in many shapes and sizes, but they share a common purpose: to help ship captains steer away from danger and toward safety.



The first lighthouses were simply fires built on platforms. But in time, lighthouses became sturdy structures able to withstand harsh wind, waves, and storms that beat against it. A lighthouse serves as a beacon in the night to help people along their way.

Similarly, a courageous person “shines a light” for truth and justice by standing up for what is right, even when it is difficult, costly, or unpopular. The courage you show can inspire others and encourage them to do the right thing, too.



Visit [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com) for additional teaching resources.

## INSPIRING QUOTES (Literacy Connection, 20 minutes)

Help students find quotes about courage, bravery, or boldness. Let students “frame” their favorite statements.

Good quotes can remind you of important truths. Search for quotes on the Internet or download an activity page with quotes at [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).



Make a frame for your favorite quotes using craft sticks. Lay ten craft sticks side-by-side to form a square. Glue two craft sticks across the ends to hold the square together, and do the same on the back of the square. Glue one craft stick across the bottom and another across the top to complete the frame.

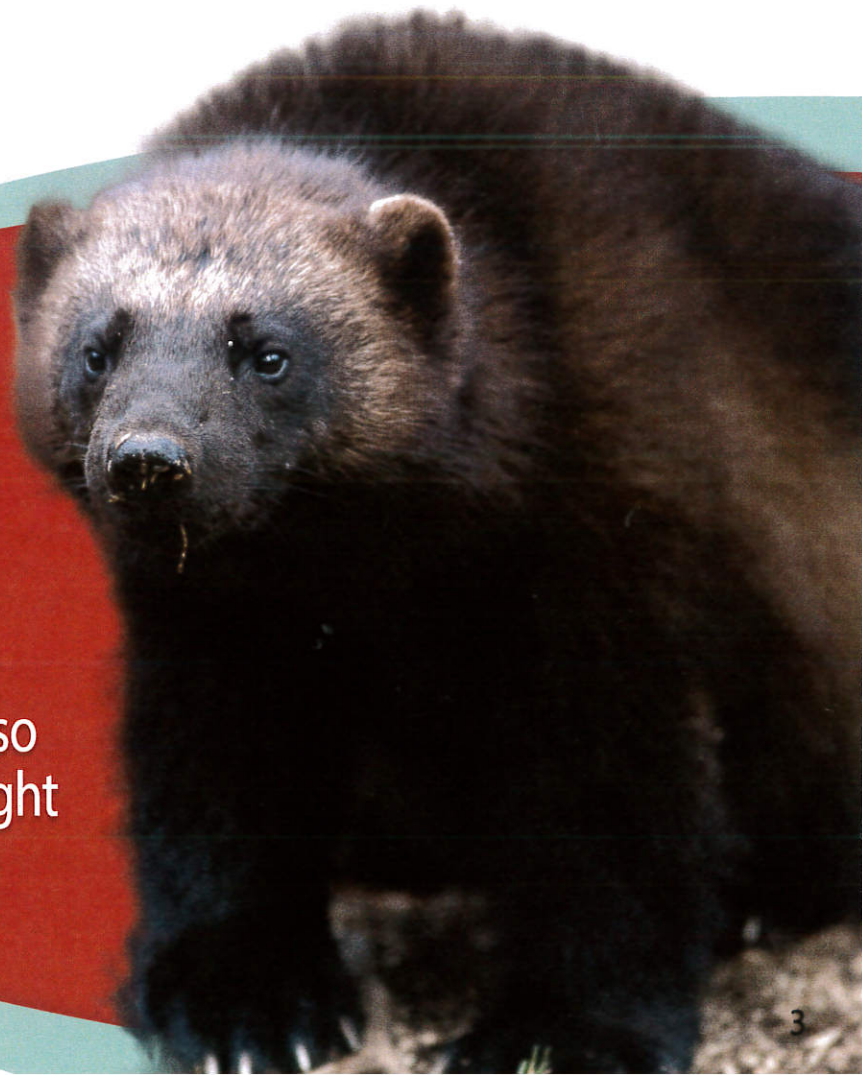
Cut squares of paper that fit inside the frame, and write quotes on each piece of paper. Show a different quote each week by taping it in place.

**Supplies:** craft sticks, glue, paper, scissors, markers, tape

# Courage



Overcoming fear so  
I can do what is right



# SECTION 2 Practice Courage

## Peer Pressure

"It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends." —*J. K. Rowling*

It is no secret that children are easily influenced by friends and classmates. Sometimes peer influence is good and healthy, but other times it leads in the wrong direction.

When you see students resist pressure to do wrong, lend your support through verbal affirmation, a smile, or an approving glance. Encourage students to exercise positive peer influence and lead others in the right direction.

Consider these examples of courage and character, especially if doing the right thing is difficult or unpopular:

- **Discretion**—to refrain from laughing at inappropriate jokes.
- **Attentiveness**—to listen in class instead of talking with friends.
- **Self-Control**—to say "no" to alcohol and other drugs.
- **Respect**—to speak kindly to others instead of mocking or making fun.
- **Compassion**—to help those in need instead of picking on them.
- **Honesty**—to not cheat on a test or help others cheat.
- **Obedience**—to follow classroom rules, even when the teacher is not watching.

## I WILL... (Discussion, 25 minutes)

### 1. Know the truth.

When you know what is true and right, it is easier to take a courageous stand.

- Have you ever been afraid of something (animals, darkness, noises, etc.) and later realized you had nothing to fear?
- Why should you get the facts instead of believing everything you hear?

### 2. Get help when I am afraid.

Always have people in your life who can be a "safe place" when you need help.

- Who can help you when you are afraid?
- What should you do if someone hurts you and says, "Don't tell anyone"?

### 3. Do what is right.

Doing the right thing is not always easy or popular. But that's what a courageous person does.

- What are some character qualities that help you know what is right? (honesty, respect, responsibility, obedience, self-control)
- How do you feel after doing something you know you shouldn't do? How does it feel when you know you did something right?

### 4. Be willing to stand alone.

Hopefully others will stand with you in doing what is right. But if not, courage means being willing to stand alone.

- Can you think of a story or movie about someone who stood alone for what is good and right?
- Why is it important to have friends with good character? What happens when you hang out with the wrong crowd?

### 5. Help those who are bullied or abused.

If you see someone being hurt, bullied, or abused, do something about it. Speak up, get help, and be a "good neighbor" to those in need.

- Why is bullying and harassing people wrong?
- Imagine that one of your friends is teasing a new student. What can you do?

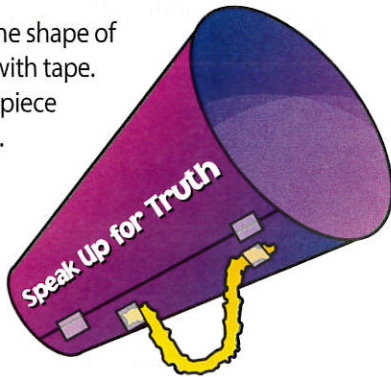
**HONESTY**  
**RESPECT**  
**RESPONSIBILITY**  
**OBEDIENCE**  
**SELF-CONTROL**

## SPEAK UP FOR TRUTH (Project, 25 minutes)

Help students make megaphones as a reminder to speak up for truth.

Curl a piece of paper into the shape of a megaphone and secure with tape. Make a handle by taping a piece of pipe cleaner to the sides.

Write *Speak Up for Truth* on the side of the megaphone. Also write the five “I Wills” for courage as a reminder to stand for what is right.



**Supplies:** paper, pipe cleaners, tape, markers

### Points to Ponder:

- If you aren't sure what to say or do, get advice from someone you trust.
- Always be respectful, even when you disagree with someone. Do not be mean, obnoxious, or rude.
- You can warn others about the dangers of doing something wrong, and you can encourage others in the right direction. But ultimately, the choice is theirs to make.
- Sometimes silence says more than words, such as refusing to laugh at mean or inappropriate jokes.

## RUN WITH CONFIDENCE (Exploration, 20 minutes)

Discuss the importance of running a race (and living life) with confidence.

Invite an athlete to speak to your students. Emphasize the importance of running, playing, and living with confidence. You can also learn a song called “Confidence!” when you visit [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).

### Points to Ponder:

- Stay focused on your goal. Do not let others distract you or discourage you from doing what is right.
- Always do your best. When you stumble and fall, pick yourself up and keep going.
- Surround yourself with friends who will encourage you in the right direction.
- Never give up!

## THINK AHEAD (Project, 25 minutes)

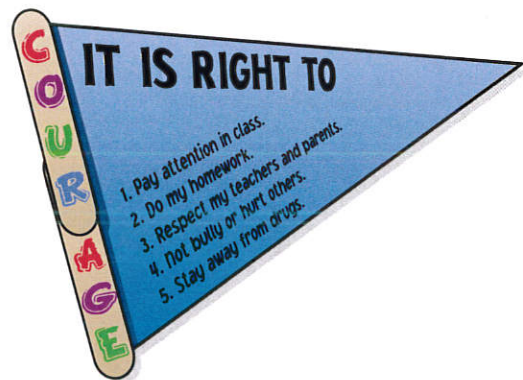
Use this activity to help students think of specific ways they can show courage at school and at home.

It is easier to stand strong “in the moment” when you determine what is right and commit to doing it—before pressure or temptation comes.

Think about specific ways you can show good character, and write your ideas on a colorful pennant. To make a pennant, cut a V-shape out of paper. Write *It Is Right to:* as a heading, followed by your examples of good character.

Glue two craft sticks together so they fit the end of your pennant. Write COURAGE on the sticks and glue them to the pennant. Place these in your classroom or hallway as a reminder to do what is right, even when it is difficult.

**Supplies:** paper, large craft sticks, scissors, glue, markers



## COURAGE POEM (Literacy Connection, 15 minutes)

Teach this poem as a way to memorize the five “I Wills.” Watch the video at [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).

I will stand for what is right because I know what's really true.  
I will even stand alone if that is what I need to do.

I will ask for help when I'm afraid, so I'll be scared no longer.  
I will look for those who need my help, together we'll be stronger!

My character is what will make a leader out of me.  
So next time through, let's say it more ENTHUSIASTICALLY!

# SECTION 3 Courage in Real Life

## JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

After John Quincy Adams served as president of the United States, he went back to Washington, D.C. to represent his district in the U.S. House of Representatives. Many thought it was humbling for Mr. Adams to be a congressman after being president. But Mr. Adams believed it was an honor to serve his people in any position.



When Mr. Adams took his new job, he had one major concern on his mind. He believed all men were created equal, and he determined to abolish the cruel

practice of slavery. On his first day in Congress, Mr. Adams presented 15 petitions to end slavery in the capital city of Washington, D.C. More petitions came to his office, and Mr. Adams faithfully presented them to Congress—as many as 350 petitions in one day!

Mr. Adams spoke with courage and conviction, which earned him the name “Old Man Eloquent.” Even when others in Congress tried to make him stop, Mr. Adams continued to speak out against slavery and stand up for those who could not defend themselves. John Quincy Adams died in 1848. Seventeen years later and after a terrible civil war, Congress finally ended slavery in the United States of America.

**Wolverines are widely known for their strength and bravery. They show no sign of fear when challenged, but stand their ground against opponents much larger in size.**

## THE WOLVERINE (Story, 20 minutes)

A 700-pound grizzly bear sniffed the cold air. It smelled the aroma of food. Hunger pains drove the bear to follow its nose across an open field, tracking the scent of meat.

Hidden behind a pile of rocks, a mother wolverine shared a meal with her three young wolverines, called kits. The kits had joined their mother on a hunting trip where they had discovered a fallen moose.

Between bites, the mother wolverine licked her young clean. Their dark brown fur with long white stripes down the sides almost matched her own. The mother weighed only 30 pounds and wasn't much bigger than a fox.

Hearing a noise, the mother wolverine turned to face whatever was interrupting her meal. It was the giant grizzly bear! Knowing the bear wanted not only the moose, but her kits as well, the wolverine stood her ground to protect her young.

The grizzly bear raised itself on its hind legs and growled at the wolverine. *Rooooaarr!!* But the mother and her kits didn't budge. Though badly outsized, she chose to defend her young and their food, and not surrender to the bear.

Fortunately for the bear, it had the wisdom to stand down and walk away. That's because even though wolverines are small, they are very brave, very strong, and will do anything to protect their young. Even a bear learns not to mess with a mother wolverine and her family.

Like a wolverine that stands up for her young, courage means standing up for what is true, right, and just—even when you are outsized or outnumbered. When you face a difficult situation or when you don't know what to do, you can find courage by asking yourself three questions:

### 1. What Is True?

Wolverines are smart animals, which makes them difficult to trap. If they find food that doesn't seem quite right, they will test to see if it's truly safe or if it's a trap that will get them in trouble. They do this by dropping sticks onto the food to spring the trap or turning the trap over so it will snap shut. Then they can safely get the food and eat it with confidence.



Learn more about  
the courage of John Quincy Adams  
at [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).

Knowing the truth also helps you live with courage. For example, when you know how much someone truly needs your help, you are more likely to help them. When you truly understand how drugs hurt your mind and body, you'll say "no" if someone pressures you to try it, no matter how "fun" it might seem at the time.

The truth is like a rock or foundation that doesn't move. That is why you should always seek the truth so you can stand firm with boldness and courage. If you don't know what is truly happening, ask someone you trust to help you figure it out. Then you can stand with courage!

## 2. What Is Right?

Wolverines basically have two speeds—standing still or full speed ahead! Once a wolverine determines the right direction to go, it runs in that direction with all its energy. It can even run across the snow because all four feet touch the snow at the same time instead of putting all its weight on one or two feet.

Knowing what is right can also help you run with confidence. When faced with a difficult situation, think of character traits such as honesty, responsibility, diligence, loyalty, compassion, respect, obedience, self-control, and wisdom. These character traits can help you figure out the right thing to do so you can put your whole heart into it.



Watch a video of the courage story at [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).

## 3. What Is Just?

Wolverines eat a lot of food for an animal its size. In fact, its Latin name is *gulo*, which means "glutton." However, wolverines eat just enough food to keep themselves going. When they are not so active, they go weeks without eating anything at all!

Wolverines are also very strong animals. Their teeth and jaws are strong enough to grind up bones and eat frozen meat. But just because wolverines are strong doesn't make them mean. Yes, they will fight a grizzly bear that tries to attack. But defending your family is different than going out and looking for a fight.

A courageous person does what is true, right, and just. That means doing just enough—but not too much. For example, if a student is running around the playground being silly, you can ignore the student and move on. But if that student starts hurting other children, you should get help from a teacher right away. However, you shouldn't start beating the student with a stick—that would be too much.

Justice means doing what is appropriate for the situation. This helps you be bold but not brash, confident but not cocky, fearless but not careless.

Whatever problems you face, remember the wolverine and try to do what is true, right, and just. That is what it means to have courage.



# Family Connection


**OVERVIEW:** Instead of shrinking back when afraid, courage means overcoming fear and doing what is right. When you know something is good and true, stand up with courage instead of hiding in fear. You never know how your boldness and bravery will inspire others to stand up for what is true, right, and just.

## Courage

**Definition:** Overcoming fear so I can do what is right

### I WILL...

- Know the truth.
- Get help when I am afraid.
- Do what is right.
- Be willing to stand alone.
- Help those who are bullied or abused.



Wolverines are widely known for their strength and bravery. They show no sign of fear when challenged, but stand their ground against opponents much larger in size.

### CHARACTER QUIZ:

1. Why is courage important? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who can you talk to when you feel afraid? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Courage means: **a.** doing whatever you want. **b.** ignoring danger. **c.** standing for what is right. **d.** never being afraid.
4. A courageous person helps people in need: TRUE? or FALSE?
5. Imagine your friends are picking on someone new at school. What could you say or do? \_\_\_\_\_

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