



Status Quo Bias: Lesson Plan

Topic	
The status quo bias is an emotion-based bias that makes people feel that perpetuating the present state of things is preferable over any change. Even if the change would be positive from an objective perspective, humans are programmed to view any deviation from the current reality as a negative loss.	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Psychology, Economics, Money Management, Civics	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/topic/status-quo-bias-if-it-aint-broke-why-fix-it/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give examples of situations where the status quo bias may occur. • Explain the similarities and differences between status quo bias and loss aversion effect. • Explain potential negative consequences of the status quo bias. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Status quo, Cognitive bias, emotional bias	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet	
Before you watch	
<p>Turn & Talk: Let's say that you're a longtime subscriber of Yfinity's TV service. However, you've just received some advertisements from Horizon that boast cheaper rates and more channel choices. Would you stay with Yfinity, or would</p>	



you switch to Horizon? Explain your choice.

After they have a few minutes to discuss their answer, then pose this question:

Are you someone who prefers to stick with what's familiar, or are you someone who loves trying new things? What are some pros and cons that come with doing only what's familiar? How about the pros and cons of constantly trying new things?

While you watch

Answer questions 1-3 on the Worksheet.

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Name one real-life example of status quo bias that you or someone you know has experienced.
2. What is the most dangerous consequence of the status quo bias that you can think of?
3. In what situations might status quo bias be a positive force in society?

Activity Ideas

- Split students into small groups, assign each group one of the scenarios on the Worksheet to discuss and then explain to the class.
- Suggest a proposed change for the town/city you live in (building a new park, a mall, a factory, and garbage dump, defunding an art program- it can be one where the change seems good or bad). Have some students role-play as town council members and some as citizens. Assign them to each side (change or stay the same). The citizens make their case and the town council chooses a winner.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Burmeister, Katrin, and Christian Schade. "Are Entrepreneurs' Decisions More Biased? An Experimental Investigation of the Susceptibility to Status Quo Bias." *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 22, no. 3, May 2007, pp. 340–62. *ScienceDirect*, doi:[10.1016/j.jbusvent.2006.04.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2006.04.002).
2. Cherry, Kendra. "How the Status Quo Bias Influences the Decisions You Make." *Verywell Mind*,



<https://www.verywellmind.com/status-quo-bias-psychological-definition-4065385>. Accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

3. Crandall, Christian S., et al. "Status Quo Framing Increases Support for Torture." *Social Influence*, vol. 4, no. 1, Jan. 2009, pp. 1–10. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, doi:[10.1080/15534510802124397](https://doi.org/10.1080/15534510802124397).
4. Samuelson, William, and Richard Zeckhauser. "Status Quo Bias in Decision Making." *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, vol. 1, no. 1, Mar. 1988, pp. 7–59. *Springer Link*, doi:[10.1007/BF00055564](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00055564).