

# How to Be a Better Decision-Maker

Making good decisions is a learned skill that is within your grasp. By developing effective decision-making skills, you will be able to cope with matters or solve problems of importance to you.

When you are trying to make a big decision, understanding and using an effective process can help. The decision-making model provided below involves a fundamental series of steps that can help you sharpen your decision-making skills. It is based on gathering and analyzing information.

As you gain experience in using the decision-making process, your chances of being satisfied with your decisions will increase. Begin your skill-building with small decisions so you are ready to tackle larger decisions, such as choosing a major or a career, with confidence.

<b>1. Identify the decision to be made</b>	
<p>You realize that a decision must be made. Your awareness may be triggered by a variety of things, such as the need to declare a major.</p> <p>Define clearly the nature of the decision you must make. It is helpful to state the problem in writing and to discuss the decision to be made with another person, such as an advisor or a counselor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are my concerns?</li> <li>• What decisions do I face?</li> <li>• For how much of the choice am I responsible?</li> </ul>
<b>2. Be willing to commit time, energy, and resources to your decision</b>	
<p>Commitment on your part to do the work involved in making a decision is critical to the process, and ultimately, to making a successful decision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much time do I have available for gathering information, and making and carrying out the decision?</li> </ul>
<b>3. Gather relevant information</b>	
<p>Most decisions require collecting pertinent information. It is important to know what information is needed, the best sources of this information, and how to go about getting it. Be sure to collect both internal information (from yourself) and external information (from written materials, other people, the Internet, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information do I already have?</li> <li>• What additional information do I need?</li> <li>• What resources are available?</li> </ul>
<b>4. Identify alternatives</b>	
<p>Now it is time to identify the merit of each option, and reduce your prospects to a manageable number (for example, reduce the possible programs of study to two or three). Through the process of collecting information, you should be able to identify two or more possible paths of action, or alternatives. You may also be able to construct new alternatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What ideas or choices sound promising to me?</li> <li>• What alternatives do I want to know more about?</li> <li>• What are the different ways of bringing about the desired result?</li> </ul>

<b>5. Weigh the evidence</b>	
<p>One of the elements of the decision-making process is looking ahead to see what might happen if you choose one of the alternatives. At this point, you are evaluating the merit of each of the possible choices. For each option that remains on your list, ask yourself: "What might I experience as a result of selecting and implementing this alternative? What is the best possible outcome that could occur if I choose this option? What is the worst possible outcome that could occur?"</p> <p>Don't just think about what could happen; also consider the probability or likelihood that it will happen. You should draw upon the information gathered, the advice and insight of others, and your own personal feelings to objectively imagine what it would be like if you carried out each of the alternatives to the end. Through this step, you begin to favor certain alternatives which appear to have a higher potential for solving your problem or reaching your goal.</p> <p>The better you are at predicting possible outcomes, the more likely you are to choose actions with outcomes that will be satisfying for you. Eventually you should place the alternatives in priority order, based upon your own value system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What costs and benefits are involved for each alternative?</li> <li>• What risks are involved for each alternative?</li> <li>• Is the decision mine alone or does it depend upon or affect someone else?</li> <li>• What is the likelihood that each possible positive and negative outcome will happen?</li> </ul>
<b>6. Choose among the alternatives</b>	
<p>Once you have weighed all the evidence and calculated the risks associated with each considered alternative, you are ready to select the alternative which seems to be best suited to you. Just do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which alternative best meets my needs?</li> </ul>
<b>7. Take action</b>	
<p>You should now take some positive action which begins to implement the decision you made. For example: After choosing a program of study, you complete a Change of Status form and/or register for courses in the selected major.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will I begin?</li> <li>• What will I do next?</li> <li>• When will I start?</li> <li>• How will I proceed?</li> </ul>
<b>8. Review your decision and its consequences</b>	
<p>You review the results of your decision and evaluate whether or not it has helped to solve the problem you initially identified. If the decision has not resolved your problem, you may need to repeat some steps of the decision-making process in order to make a new decision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways were my needs met by this alternative?</li> <li>• In what ways were my needs not met?</li> <li>• Overall, how satisfying was the outcome?</li> <li>• What are my alternatives if the outcome of the decision is not satisfactory?</li> </ul>