



YOUR PLAYBOOK

Decision making



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Why This Playbook



Welcome to the “Decision making” Playbook!

Decision making is a skill you use daily—whether you’re choosing a career path, deciding how to spend your weekend, or figuring out the best approach for a team project. Strong decision-making skills help you navigate life’s challenges with confidence, minimize regrets, and boost your leadership potential. By dedicating about two hours to read, reflect, and do the hands-on activities in this playbook, you’ll gain practical strategies to make better, well-informed choices that align with your values and goals.



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Playbook Overview

In this playbook, you'll explore:

Foundational Principles: Understanding the nature and stages of decision making.

Methods & Tools: Proven frameworks that help simplify complex choices.

Common Pitfalls: Recognizing biases and errors that undermine good decisions.

Actionable Exercises: Simple daily habits and activities that sharpen your decision-making process.

Assessments Two multiple-choice tests—one for knowledge and one for real-world application.

Estimated Time to Complete:

~2 hours (reading, reflecting, doing activities, and taking assessments)

What Is Decision making?



Decision making is the process of identifying options, evaluating them based on set criteria (like goals, risks, or values), and selecting the one you believe to be the best fit. It involves balancing emotion and logic, gathering relevant information, and sometimes making a leap of faith when all facts aren't available.

Real-Life Example:

Sara's Career Path

Sara was torn between pursuing a master's degree right after college or starting a job at a promising startup. By weighing the benefits (further specialization vs. immediate professional experience), talking to mentors, and reflecting on her long-term ambitions, she made a confident choice to join the startup first and potentially pursue graduate studies later.

Why Decision Making Matters

- **Reduces Indecision & Regret:** Well-informed choices lower the odds of second-guessing yourself later.
- **Builds Leadership & Trust:** People look up to those who can make firm, sound decisions—especially in group or team settings.
- **Enhances Problem Solving:** Good decisions speed up progress on goals and help avoid getting stuck on minor issues.
- **Improves Life Satisfaction:** Whether big or small, consistent and thoughtful decisions shape a happier, more purposeful life.

Real-Life Example:

Jamal's Volunteer Program

As a volunteer coordinator, Jamal had to decide how to allocate limited funds. By prioritizing essential resources like training materials over optional extras, his volunteers were better equipped, leading to a more impactful program. This solid decision-making boosted the team's morale and effectiveness.

Core Pillars of Decision Making



01

Clarity of Purpose

Definition: Knowing your main objective before picking a path.

Why It Matters: Without a clear goal, you risk choosing an option that doesn't align with your true needs.

Real-Life Example: If your real aim is to learn leadership skills, a role with mentorship opportunities might be more valuable than a higher-paying but less developmental job

03

Evaluation of Options

Definition: Comparing the pros, cons, and potential risks/benefits of each choice.

Why It Matters: Minimizes the chance of overlooked factors that could negatively affect the result.

Real-Life Example: Deciding on a university major by examining course structures, career prospects, and personal interest in the subject matter

05

Follow-Through & Reflection

Definition: Taking action based on your decision and assessing the outcome afterward.

Why It Matters: Implementation and post-decision evaluation allow you to refine your process and learn from each experience.

Real-Life Example: Choosing a new project management tool for your club, then measuring if it truly improved coordination after a few weeks.

02

Information Gathering

Definition: Collecting relevant facts, data, or opinions that can guide your choice.

Why It Matters: More accurate information leads to better outcomes and fewer surprises.

Real-Life Example: Before choosing an internship, reading reviews and talking to current interns to understand the day-to-day culture and opportunities.

04

Balanced Intuition & Logic

Definition: Using gut feelings alongside rational analysis.

Why It Matters: Intuition can reveal hidden preferences or risks, while logic ensures thorough analysis.

Real-Life Example: Feeling excited about a startup opportunity but also using a cost-benefit approach to confirm it makes sense financially.

Common Misconceptions and Mistakes

Misconception #1: More Options Always Lead to Better Decisions

Reality: Having too many choices can be overwhelming, sometimes causing decision paralysis.

Real-Life Example: Scrolling through endless streaming service options can lead to watching nothing because it's too hard to pick.

Misconception #2: Fast Decisions Are Always Good Decisions

Reality: While “gut” decisions can be right, rushing without due diligence may lead to costly errors.

Real-Life Example: Accepting the first job offer without comparing roles or salaries might cause regret later.

Mistake #1: Ignoring Emotional Factors

What Happens: If you dismiss feelings entirely, you might select options that clash with your personal values or intuition.

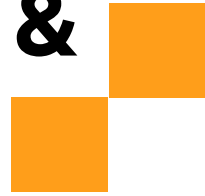
Real-Life Example: Choosing a well-paid corporate job despite deeply wishing to work in the nonprofit sector.

Mistake #2: Over-Reliance on Others' Opinions

What Happens: External guidance is helpful, but ultimately, you must own your choice and its consequences.

Real-Life Example: Selecting a course just because friends say it's “easy,” but then finding it uninteresting and lacking long-term benefits.

Practical Frameworks & Strategies



A

The “DECIDE” Model

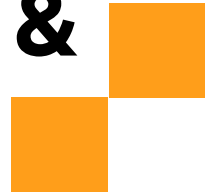
- **D** – Define the problem or question clearly.
- **E** – Establish criteria or goals (What matters most?).
- **C** – Collect relevant information.
- **I** – Identify feasible options.
- **D** – Decide the best option through comparison.
- **E** – Evaluate the result, and learn from it.

Real-Life Example:

When selecting a volunteer project, define your aim (D), list your goals (E: skill-building, community impact), gather info (C: talk to organizers), identify options (I: 3 different charities), decide (D) which one aligns best, and finally evaluate (E) if it met your expectations afterward.

Write Here

Practical Frameworks & Strategies



B

Risk-Reward Matrix

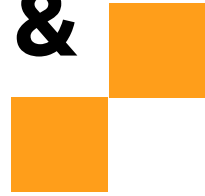
- **Use Case:** For decisions where potential gain or harm is significant.
- **Method:** Plot each option on a matrix of high/low risk vs. high/low reward.
- **Benefit:** Visually clarifies whether an option is high-stakes, high-benefit, etc.

Real-Life Example:

Considering an entrepreneurial venture (high risk, high reward) vs. a safe administrative job (low risk, low reward).

Write Here

Practical Frameworks & Strategies



C

The “Pre-Mortem” Technique

- **Description:** Imagine your decision fails completely. Ask, “What could’ve caused this failure?”
- **Benefit:** Identifies weaknesses early, prompting preventive measures.

Real-Life Example:

Before launching a campus event, you might predict “Poor promotion leads to low attendance” and thus allocate extra effort to marketing.

Write Here

Everyday Habits to Strengthen Decision Making

01

Set Small, Daily Intentions



ACTION:

- Each morning, decide on 1–2 priorities for the day



BENEFIT:

- Practice focusing on what truly matters, reducing scattered energy.



Real-Life Example:

- Prioritizing finishing a research outline over less critical tasks.

Write Here

Everyday Habits to Strengthen Decision Making

02

Limit Options



ACTION:

When facing many choices, try narrowing down to a “top 2 or 3” before making a final pick.



BENEFIT:

Eases overwhelm, streamlines comparison.



Real-Life Example:

If choosing a language to learn, narrow down to Spanish vs. French vs. Mandarin, instead of considering 10 languages at once.

Write Here

Everyday Habits to Strengthen Decision Making

03

Seek Balanced Feedback



ACTION:

When uncertain, get perspectives from people who share similar values and from those who think differently



BENEFIT:

Avoids echo chambers, uncovers hidden angles.



Real-Life Example:

If contemplating a gap year, talk to someone who took one and loved it, and someone who chose not to and thrived.

Write Here

Everyday Habits to Strengthen Decision Making

04

Reflect on Past Decisions



ACTION:

After a notable choice, journal what went well and what could be improved.



BENEFIT:

Reinforces good habits, reduces repeating mistakes.



Real-Life Example:

Reflecting on how waiting too long to decide on a group project topic wasted time.

Write Here

Everyday Habits to Strengthen Decision Making

05

Practice Quick Decisions on Small Matters



ACTION:

Use a simple, time-limited approach for trivial choices.



BENEFIT:

Frees mental space for bigger decisions.



Real-Life Example:

Allowing only 60 seconds to pick a menu item rather than agonizing for 10 minutes.

Write Here

Self-Reflection Prompts

01

Personal Values

- Do you consider your core values (like integrity, growth, or happiness) when deciding?
- Which value often gets overlooked?

WriteHere

02

Recent Regrets

- Recall a decision that led to regret—was it rushed, or did you ignore key info?
- How could you handle a similar situation differently?

WriteHere

03

Information Gaps

- When you're stuck, is it due to lack of research or excessive data?
- How can you balance the two?

WriteHere

Self-Reflection Prompts

04

Risk Tolerance

- Are you overly cautious, or do you jump at high-risk, high-reward scenarios?
- Where could you push yourself to expand your comfort zone?

WriteHere

05

Decision Fatigue

- Do you get overwhelmed by routine or smaller decisions?
- How might simplifying daily choices free up mental energy for bigger decisions?

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Thinking or writing down answers can clarify patterns in how you make decisions—and where you can grow.

Short, Effective Activities

01

Two-Minute Timer (2–5 minutes)



What to Do:

For minor decisions, give yourself exactly two minutes to choose.



BENEFIT:

Exercises decisiveness and reduces overthinking.



Real-Life Example:

Picking a snack at a campus café: if you can't decide in two minutes, just go with one option.

Write Here

Short, Effective Activities

02

Risk-Reward Quick Assessment (10 minutes)



What to Do:

Choose a pending decision, list its potential risks and rewards.



BENEFIT:

Clarifies if the payoff is worth the potential downsides.



Real-Life Example:

If you're unsure about auditioning for a talent show, weigh possible embarrassment vs. the experience and opportunity for growth.

Write Here

Short, Effective Activities

03

DECIDE on a Daily Challenge (15 minutes)



What to Do:

Identify a small dilemma (like scheduling study time vs. socializing). Walk through each DECIDE step.



BENEFIT:

Reinforces a systematic approach to everyday decisions.



Real-Life Example:

Deciding between an extra hour of gaming or finishing an assignment early using DECIDE to confirm the better long-term outcome.

Write Here

Short, Effective Activities

04

Pre-Mortem Brainstorm (10–15 minutes)



What to Do:

For an upcoming event or project, imagine it failed entirely. Write down all plausible reasons for failure, then address them.



BENEFIT:

Prepares you for real obstacles and helps form contingency plans.



Real-Life Example:

Setting up a student club fair. Potential failures: no marketing, unclear schedule, untrained volunteers. Now you know what to fix.

Write Here

Short, Effective Activities

05

Debrief Past Success (5 minutes)



What to Do:

Think of a previous decision that went really well. Identify why it succeeded—good info, aligned with your values, timely action, etc.



BENEFIT:

Replicates proven success factors in future decisions.



Real-Life Example:

Realizing that your best internship choice happened because you thoroughly researched the company's culture, which matched your aspirations.

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Real-Life Case: Decision Making in Action



Case: Amina's Study Abroad Choice

Amina had an opportunity to study abroad for a semester but worried about the cost and missing important networking events at home. She decided to systematically approach it:

- **Clarity:** Her main goal was to gain international exposure and improve her language skills.
- **Information Gathering:** She researched scholarship options, living expenses, and course credits that would transfer back.
- **Evaluation of Options:** Comparing the cost-benefit of the study abroad program versus staying. She listed pros (language immersion, global perspective) and cons (tuition fees, time away from family).
- **Balanced Intuition & Logic:** Part of her felt excited about new experiences; logically, the scholarship coverage was good, and the program aligned with her career.
- **Follow-Through & Reflection:** She took the leap and enrolled. After returning, she realized the international network and cultural adaptability she gained far outweighed her initial concerns.

Amina's methodical yet open-minded approach led to a decision she found rewarding both personally and academically.



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Unleash The Leader Within.

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