

Decisions, decisions! How do I decide?

Chapter 8

Making Decisions

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- **distinguish** between different types of decisions.
- **list** the seven steps of the decision-making process.
- **apply** the decision-making process to real-life situations.
- **explain** the role trade-offs play in making decisions.
- **explain** the importance of personal, career, and work decisions.

Key Concepts

- You make different types of decisions every day.
- The decision-making process helps you to arrive at a well thought-out decision.
- The decisions you make involve trade-offs.
- You can use the decision-making process to make personal, career, and work decisions.

Key Terms

decision
routine decision
impulse decision
decision-making process
alternatives
implement
trade-off

Decision Making—A Daily Task

decision

A choice or a judgment.

When you make a *decision*, you make a specific choice or judgment. You arrive at a conclusion. You make up your mind. You make many decisions every day. Most of them are fairly simple. You make them quickly, without much thought. Some of your recent decisions may have involved the following choices:

- walking to work or riding
- seeing a movie or going to a dance
- studying or watching television
- eating a hamburger or tacos

Other decisions are more difficult to make. You must think about them and plan for them. The following decisions are examples of those requiring thoughtful planning:

- when to get a job
- what courses to take in school
- what to do after graduation
- what career path to follow

As you read this chapter, you will learn more about making both the easy and the difficult decisions. You will also learn ways to make the difficult decisions easier to handle.

Routine Decisions

routine decision

A decision made often.

Routine decisions are decisions you make often. Choosing what time to get up in the morning, what clothes to wear, and what to eat for breakfast are all routine decisions. You make these decisions automatically. At one time, each of these decisions took some thought and planning. By now, they are part of your daily routine. Less and less planning is needed as decisions become automatic or routine. See 8-1.

Impulse Decisions

impulse decision

A decision made quickly, without much thought.

Impulse decisions are snap decisions. They don't require much thought or planning. Instead, these decisions are made quickly. They are based on feelings or reactions to certain situations. You may grab an umbrella as you leave for school

**8-1**

Wearing a raincoat on a rainy day is a routine decision.

if dark clouds are in sight. You may decide to walk home from school instead of riding if the sun is brightly shining.

At times, impulse decisions can be fun and exciting. However, important decisions in life should not be made on impulse.

Thoughtful Decisions and the Decision-Making Process

Many of the decisions you will face in life will be difficult decisions. They will be too unfamiliar to treat as impulse or routine decisions. They will be too important to treat as impulse decisions. You will need to take time to think about these important decisions.

The **decision-making process** will help you sort through your thoughts. It is a seven-step guide for making decisions based on careful thinking and planning. See 8-2.



Your Reading

What decisions do you make every day? Are they routine or impulse decisions?

decision-making process

A seven-step guide for making decisions based on careful thought and planning.

8-2

The decision-making process is a tool you will need to use throughout life to make good decisions.



Making a Difference

Interview someone involved in local government to find out what issues and concerns are currently being discussed regarding the community. Also, ask if there are any projects with which students in the class could help. Report your findings to class and assess the project suggestions. As a group, use the decision-making process to decide what project(s) you will choose.

alternatives

Options a person has when making a decision.

The Decision-Making Process

1. Define the issue.
2. Make a self-inventory.
3. List all possible alternatives.
4. Forecast the outcome of each alternative.
5. Choose the best alternative.
6. Make a plan of action.
7. Evaluate the results.

1. Define the Issue

To make a thoughtful decision, you must first define the question or issue. Identify just what it is that you need to choose, judge, or conclude. Sometimes the decision can be stated as a problem that needs to be solved. You must understand a situation before you can make a good decision about it.

2. Make a Self-Inventory

When facing a question or problem, it is best to review your strengths and weaknesses. What can you do to help solve this problem? Which of your talents and abilities can you use? Knowing what you can do well helps to identify possible alternatives.

3. List Possible Alternatives

Many people fail to think through the many alternatives they have. **Alternatives** are choices or options. As a result, people often never consider the best possible decision. Make a list of all the alternatives you have before you make a decision.

You may not even know what all of your choices are. In that case, do some research. Read books, magazines, check out the Internet, and talk to people. Get all the information you need. Do not limit yourself. The longer your list of alternatives is, the better your chances are of making a good decision.

4. Forecast Possible Outcomes

Think through each of your alternatives. Try to predict what would happen as a result of each choice. As you play the “what if?” game, consider both the pros and cons of each choice. Think about short-term and long-term results. Consider how each choice might affect other people as well as yourself.

5. Make a Decision

After carefully considering each alternative, one will probably stand out as the best choice. This is the time to make your decision. If you have followed the first five steps carefully, you will probably be happy with your decision. See 8-3.

6. Make an Action Plan

After making a decision, you need to put it into action, or **implement** it. When you implement a decision, you are carrying out a plan.

implement
To put a plan into action.



8-3

The color, style, and fit of each alternative should be considered when deciding what to buy.



Your Reading

With what types of decisions would you use the decision-making process?

If you aren't sure how to act on your decision, ask the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* questions: Who should take action? What should happen? When do you want it to happen? Where should it happen? Why should it happen? How should it happen? The answers to these basic questions will help you implement your plan.

7. Evaluate Results

Finally, look at the results of your decision. This last step is an important one. Take time to judge the outcome of your decision. Good or bad, you must accept responsibility for it. If the outcome turns out as expected and you are pleased, you made a good decision. If not, make an effort to learn from your experience. Determine why you are not pleased. Think again about your alternatives. You may need to alter your decision or make a different decision to get the results you want.

Trade-Offs

Every time you make a decision, you are making a choice. By choosing one alternative, you give up the others. When you choose to get married, you give up being single. When you choose to take a job in a big city, you limit your chances to enjoy the peacefulness of the countryside. There is a **trade-off** or exchange for every decision you make. One thing must be given up in return for another. See 8-4.

You may decide to purchase an expensive sweater for the dance next month. To do this, you will need some money. Therefore, you must set up a savings plan. To reach your goal, you must consider all possible trade-offs. Getting more money to buy a new sweater may mean working more hours at a part-time job. If you don't have a job, buying a new sweater may mean not doing some of the following:

- going to a movie
- buying a new CD or DVD
- stopping for pizza after a game

Do not make important decisions too quickly. The trade-off principle is always at work. Keep this in mind when you make decisions.

trade-off
The giving up of one thing for another.



Your Reading

How do trade-offs influence the decisions you make?



Bergen County Technical School

Personal Decisions

Personal decisions are choices that affect you personally. They are influenced by your likes and dislikes. Your personal decisions will determine such areas as the following:

- your hairstyle
- the clothes you wear
- your friends
- the lifestyle you lead

Your personal decisions may affect your career decisions. If you choose to wear casual clothes to work in a very conservative bank, you may not fit into the conservative work culture of the bank. If you choose friends that have questionable character or a bad reputation, you may have trouble getting a good job. Personal and career decisions are often interwoven.

Career Decisions

Many people spend more time planning their vacations than they do planning their careers. Explore many career

8-4

Not joining the tennis team this year may be a necessary trade-off for choosing to join the archery team and learning a new sport.

Community Connections

Attend a meeting of local government leaders to observe decision making in action. (You may be able to view the meeting on television if your community has a cable show devoted to local events.) For each of the issues discussed at the meeting, identify how closely the formal decision-making process was followed. What trade-offs were involved in the decisions? What did you learn from the experience?



Your Reading

How can personal and career decisions be interwoven?



Your Reading

Who can help you in making career decisions?

paths to find one or more that you might like to pursue. Then match your traits with the requirements of the career paths you are considering. See 8-5.

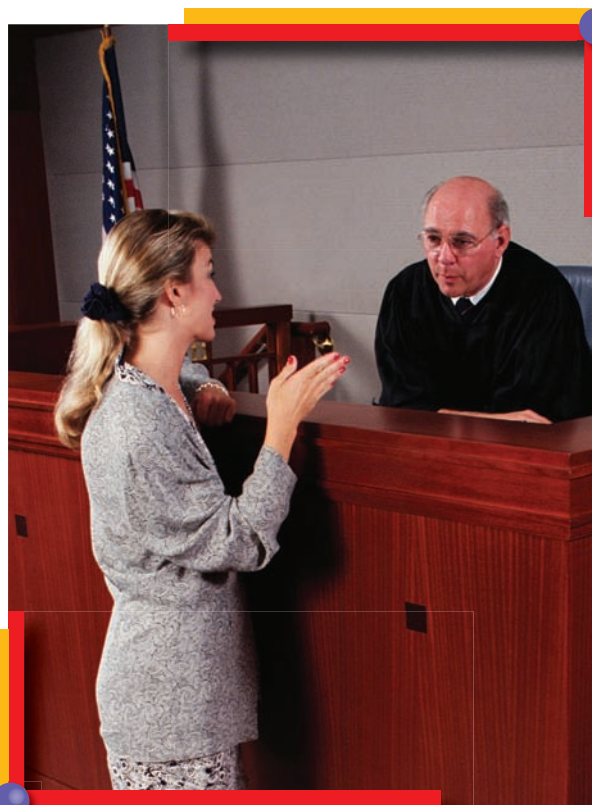
Gather as much information as you can to assist you in making a wise career choice. Discuss your career plans with your teachers and guidance counselors. Talk to friends, family members, and neighbors. They can help you explore career paths. Do additional research in libraries, if necessary. Do not limit yourself.

Analyze your career alternatives so you can choose a career path that suits you. Once you decide on a career, draw up a plan of action that will help you reach your career goal. As you make career decisions, consider the following factors:

- What courses and programs will you take in high school?
- How much effort will you put into your studies?
- What skills will you develop?
- What schooling and training beyond high school are you willing to pursue?

8-5

If you can think clearly and speak persuasively, you have some of the important traits needed for becoming a lawyer.



- What careers will you explore?
- In what extra-curricular activities will you participate to explore career options, personal skills, and talents?

Work Decisions

In the workplace, you will face many decisions. These decisions may affect your job. They may also affect other people. See 8-6. Remember, decisions are choices. As a worker, you will make decisions every day. The following decisions are some that you might face:

- Should I complete this order or go on break?
- Should I work overtime?
- Should I tell my boss about a faulty product?
- Should I take this promotion or wait for another?



Your Reading

How would you follow the steps of the decision-making process when making a work decision?

8-6

A customer service agent frequently must decide how to deal with impatient customers.

Often the answers are obvious, but sometimes they are not. In some cases, you may face two or more choices that seem good. Simply follow the seven steps of the decision-making process. See 8-7.

Remember, *making no decision* is actually a decision. It is choosing to take no action. It is deciding to accept whatever happens or whatever other people choose for you. It is giving up a chance to manage your own life.

8-7

In some work situations, you will help others to make decisions.



Summary

You make many decisions every day. You make most of them quickly and easily, without much thought. Important decisions that will affect your future deserve careful consideration. The decision-making process is a seven-step guide based on careful thinking and planning. It can be applied to any situation.

All decisions involve trade-offs. Be sure to consider the trade-offs involved in your decisions. The results of personal decisions sometimes affect more than just your personal life. They may influence your career and family life.

Career questions and work issues are often difficult. Use the decision-making process to help sort through your thoughts. If you follow each step, you are likely to make good decisions and get the results you want.



Reviewing Key Concepts

1. Give five examples of routine decisions.
2. On what are impulse decisions based?
3. List and explain the seven steps of the decision-making process.
4. What should you consider when forecasting the possible outcome of each alternative to a decision?
5. When people implement plans, what are they doing?
6. Why is the last step of the decision-making process an important one?
7. What is the relationship between decisions and trade-offs?
8. Which of the following is an example of the results of personal decisions?
 - A. classes offered by your school
 - B. the friends you have
 - C. your football team's opponents
 - D. businesses that offer entry-level jobs
9. True or false. Personal decisions are not related to career decisions.
10. What happens when you do *not* make a decision?

Building Academic Skills

Science. Compare the steps in the decision-making process to the scientific methods of problem solving. Examine how they are similar as well as how they are different.

Building Technology Skills

1. Search the Internet, using the key word *decision making*. Research the resources available, making a list of the most helpful Web sites. Share them with the class.
2. Videotape the decision-making process in action. Working in a group, bring in several items of clothing and pretend you are shopping. In the production, use the decision-making steps to decide which outfit to buy.

Building Career Knowledge and Skills

1. Write a short story in which the main character makes both routine and impulse decisions.
2. In class, discuss ways in which personal decisions may influence career decisions. Also discuss ways in which career decisions may influence personal decisions.
3. As a class, make a list of common work-related matters that require decision making.

Building Workplace Skills

Apply the seven steps of the decision-making process to a real or imaginary career-related example. Work with two or three classmates and determine as a team who will do which tasks. Use the example to explain the decision-making process in a class presentation. Include posters and/or handouts designed with the help of a computer.