

# Decision-making styles

## Introduction to this workbook

Thinking about how you tend to make decisions can be really helpful.

It can help you:

- ✓ Spot your habits
- ✓ Try out alternative styles
- ✓ Know that there's not one 'right way'

You'll identify your usual decision-making habits on a series of scales. Then you'll read more about them and decide on any you want to change to support decision about your future.

## Step 1: Learn about decision-making styles

### Decision-making is a matter of habit

How you make decisions isn't hardwired into your personality. We can think about it as a set of habits you form over time, habits that can change.<sup>1</sup>

We learn from experience:

- If how you made a decision led to a good result, you're likely to use the same way of making decisions again.
- If a previous strategy didn't work out well, you might tend to avoid that way of making decisions.

In this way, habits can be helpful!

But they're not always helpful when the scenario changes. Decision-making habits from everyday life may not work as well for career decision-making.

For example, if you're deciding where to go on a group trip, doing what your friends want could save time and lead to a good result. But this isn't a great way to choose your post-16 options!

Luckily, it's possible to:

- Spot your current decision-making habits
- Think about how they might help with or get in the way of career decision-making
- Choose to try a different approach.
- Build a set of decision-making habits for careers stuff that will help you in the future too.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scott, S. G. and Bruce, R. A. (1995) 'Decision-Making Style: The Development and Assessment of a New Measure', Educational and Psychological Measurement, 55(5), pp. 818–831.

## Decision-making has different dimensions

You might hear people describe how they make decisions with one word ("I'm a *procrastinator*", "I'm a *perfectionist*"). But there are lots of different aspects involved, which we call dimensions.

Two 'perfectionists' might be different when it comes to other dimensions of decision-making. For example, one might talk things through with other people, and the other might work alone. One might be super-speedy reaching a decision, and the other might take a long time.

It's thought that there are likely to be 11 dimensions involved in career decision-making<sup>2</sup>. Understanding your habits means looking at each of these aspects.

## Step 2: Spot how you have tended to make decisions in the past

- Each dimension is a scale from 1-5. There's a description at each end of each scale.
- Where do your habits sit?
- Tick one box on each scale to represent your usual decision-making habits.

### Gathering information

How much information do you like to have?

1 - I gather minimal information	2	3	4	5 - I gather as much as possible
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Using information

How do you use the information you gather?

1 - I step back, consider it overall	2	3	4	5 - I think about each aspect in turn
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Control

How much control over making decisions do you think you have?

1 - I leave it to chance or luck	2	3	4	5 - I'm in complete control
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

---

<sup>2</sup> Gati et al, (2010), Journal of Vocational Behavior, Volume 76, Issue 2, pp. 277-291

### Effort

How much effort do you tend to put into the process?

1 - Minimal effort	2	3	4	5 - Maximum effort
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Procrastination

How much do you procrastinate about making a decision?

1 - I don't really procrastinate	2	3	4	5 - I procrastinate a lot
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Speed of final decision

Once you have all the relevant information, how long do you tend to take to decide?

1 - I decide very quickly	2	3	4	5 - It takes me ages
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Talking it through

How much do you talk decisions through with other people?

1 - I don't talk it through with others	2	3	4	5 - I always talk it through with others
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Responsibility

Do you tend to take the responsibility for making your own decisions?

1 - Often others make the choice for me	2	3	4	5 - Usually it's all down to me
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Pleasing others

How important is it for you to make decisions that please other people?

1 - Other people aren't a big factor	2	3	4	5 - It's all about pleasing other people
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Perfectionism

When you make decisions, how much is it about getting a perfect result?

1 - I don't aim for perfect	2	3	4	5 - It's all about striving for perfection
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Compromise

After you've made a decision, how willing are you to compromise if you encounter difficulties?

1 - Once I've decided, I don't change at all	2	3	4	5 - I adapt as I go
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 3: Reflect on your answers

1. Add in your own scores from Step 2
2. Read and reflect on the description for each dimension. Every dimension has potential positive and negative consequences across the scale that *might* be the case for you. Only you can decide if the suggestions are relevant for you.
3. Decide if this is a habit that you want to change for career decision making – it's fine to conclude that this dimension isn't a problem!
4. If yes, think about what you could do differently. You might find this helpful to talk through with someone.
5. Write down what you're going to try now

Whether or not to change your decision-making habits is really personal, so there's not a right or a wrong. What's helpful for one person, might not be helpful for someone else. Have a look at the examples below (all based on the same dimension, and with the same scores), to review two different conclusions. Neither one is right or wrong!

### Example 1

Dimension	Description	Your score	Want to change this?	What are you going to try now?
<b>Gathering information</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend to only gather the bare minimum of information):</p> <p>➔ you might miss some important facts, but at least you won't get overwhelmed with information.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you collect as much relevant information as possible):</p> <p>➔ you might find it hard to process it all, but at least you know lots to inform your decision.</p>	5	✓	I'm going to set a limit on research for my plans next year as I don't want the feeling of information overwhelm again.

### Example 2

Dimension	Description	Your score	Want to change this?	What are you going to try now?
<b>Gathering information</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend to only gather the bare minimum of information):</p> <p>➔ you might miss some important facts, but at least you won't get overwhelmed with information.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you collect as much relevant information as possible):</p> <p>➔ you might find it hard to process it all, but at least you know lots to inform your decision.</p>	5		Nothing different – I know being thorough is important to me and helps me feel confident in my decision.

## Your reflections

Dimension	Description	Your score	Want to change this?	What are you going to try?
<b>Gathering information</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend to only gather the bare minimum of information):</p> <p>➔ you might miss some important facts, but at least you won't get overwhelmed with information.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you collect as much relevant information as possible):</p> <p>➔ you might find it hard to process it all, but at least you know lots to inform your decision.</p>			
<b>Using information</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend to step back and consider it overall):</p> <p>➔ you might find that you overlook some details, at least it's easier to see how aspects relate to each other.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you tend to think about each aspect in turn):</p> <p>➔ you might find that you don't make connections between things, but at least you don't miss any important details.</p>			
<b>Control</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend to leave it to chance or luck):</p> <p>➔ you might miss out on things that you could have 'made happen', although at least you're open the opportunities that come your way.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you tend to be in complete control)</p> <p>➔ you might not have an eye out for chance opportunities, although at least you're more likely to make your own opportunities happen.</p>			
<b>Effort</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend to put in minimal effort)</p> <p>➔ you might not feel committed or motivated and more likely to change your mind, although at least you've saved energy.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you tend to put in maximum effort):</p> <p>➔ you might be much more committed, but it can be easy to lose perspective.</p>			

<b>Procrastination</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend not to procrastinate)</p> <p>➔ you might find you miss the benefits of thinking things through while doing other stuff, although at least you're unlikely to miss deadlines.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you tend to procrastinate a lot)</p> <p>➔ you might leave your decision too late, and run out of time, although it can sometimes be useful to let your mind quietly think in the background.</p>			
<b>Speed of final decision</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend to decide very quickly once you have the relevant information):</p> <p>➔ you might not have time to review, reflect and think, although speedy decision-making can be helpful when you're up against a deadline.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you tend to take ages to decide once you have the relevant information):</p> <p>➔ you might end up 'overthinking' it or missing deadlines, although at least you're getting valuable reflection time.</p>			
<b>Talking it through</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you don't usually talk decisions through with others):</p> <p>➔ you might miss out on a way of thinking things through and getting helpful feedback, although at least you won't get feedback that's unhelpful</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you usually always talk it through with others):</p> <p>➔ you might not always get feedback you need or find helpful, although at least you get help thinking things through and learning from others.</p>			
<b>Responsibility</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you let others make the choice for you):</p> <p>➔ you might find you're not motivated to follow through with the choice, although at least you know if other people are supportive.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you take all the responsibility for making your own decision):</p> <p>➔ you might choose something that doesn't have the support of people around you, although at least your personal motivation would be high.</p>			

<b>Pleasing others</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (other people's feelings aren't usually a big factor in your decision making):</p> <p>➔ you might overlook the impact of your decisions on others, although at least you'd be likely to choose something that relates to your interests, skills and values.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you usually prioritise pleasing other people):</p> <p>➔ you might end up doing something that you don't really want to do, although at least it could make those around you happy.</p>			
<b>Perfectionism</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you tend to not aim for perfect):</p> <p>➔ you might set your expectations lower than necessary and achieve less than you could, although you might find it less stressful.</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you're really keen to make things as perfect as you can):</p> <p>➔ you might set your expectations higher than is possible generating unnecessary stress, although aiming for a win can make you more likely to achieve it.</p>			
<b>Compromise</b>	<p><b>If your score is nearer to 1</b> (you don't like changing plans after you've made a choice):</p> <p>➔ you might find it hard to make changes when necessary, but at least you'll be great in terms of loyalty and commitment</p> <p><b>If your score is nearer to 5</b> (you adapt and change all the time):</p> <p>➔ you might struggle to commit to a plan or an opportunity, although at least you're great at adapting when it's needed.</p>			

## Step 4: Summarise your new approach

We've covered a lot of aspects in this workbook! To help you take forward your new ideas for making career decisions, summarise your new approach below:

You might also find it helpful to tell someone important to you about habits you're trying to change, and set reminders to yourself to keep this in mind when making your next career-related decision (and reviewing it afterwards).