

## Making Decisions: 4-Step Process Lesson 1

### A. Opening Question

1. What was the last difficult decision you had to make? How did you make your decision?

### B. The 4-Step Decision-Making Process

#### 1. The 4-Step Decision-Making Process

Follow these steps to make thoughtful and effective decisions in school and in life.

##### **Step 1: Identify the Problem or Need**

- Clearly explain the decision you need to make.
- Ask yourself: What do I want from this decision? What problem am I trying to solve? What are my goals?
- Knowing your purpose will guide every other step.

##### **Step 2: Gather Information**

- Collect as much useful information as you can before deciding.
- Research different options or possible solutions.
- Use trustworthy sources like reliable websites, experts, or your own observations.
- Make sure your information is accurate, unbiased, and up to date.

##### **Step 3: Analyze the Information**

- Look at the pros (good things) and cons (downsides) of each option.
- Think about how each option matches your goals and values.
- Consider short-term and long-term outcomes.
- Choose the option that offers the most benefits with acceptable risks.

#### **Step 4: Reflect and Adjust as Needed**

- After making your decision, review how it turned out.
- Ask yourself: Did it meet my goals? What worked well? What could be improved?
- If it didn't go as planned, make changes or try a different approach.
- Remember: decision-making is a skill you can improve with practice.

2. What are your thoughts on this decision-making process?

### **C. Decision-Making Process Example: Upgrade to a New Phone?**

#### **1. Example: Should I Upgrade to a New Phone?**

##### **Step 1: Identify the Problem or Need**

- Situation: My phone works, but it's older and a new model was released.
- Goal: Decide whether to keep my current phone or get the new one.
- Questions: Do I need a new phone or just want one? What problem would upgrading solve?

##### **Step 2: Gather Information**

- Compare features, prices, and trade-in deals.
- Read reviews from users and tech experts.
- Ask friends or family for their opinions and experiences.

##### **Step 3: Analyze the Information**

Option 1 – Keep My Current Phone:

Pros: Save money, no new payments.

Cons: May get slower over time, battery might wear out.

Option 2 – Upgrade to the New Model:

Pros: Faster speed, better camera, longer battery life.

Cons: Expensive, might have features I don't need.

Option 3 – Buy a Cheaper or Refurbished Phone:

Pros: Lower cost, still an upgrade from my current phone.

Cons: Not all the latest features.

**Step 4: Reflect and Adjust as Needed**

- If I upgrade: See if the new features are worth the cost.
- If I keep my phone: Try replacing the battery or removing unused apps to improve performance.
- If I'm unhappy with my choice: Adjust by selling the phone or switching models.

2. What are your thoughts on this example of using the decision-making process?

**D. Asking the Right Questions**

1. Directions: Good decision-making begins with asking the right questions. In this activity, you'll examine real-life scenarios and brainstorm the questions you need to ask during the first two steps of the decision-making process. Choose a scenario and write down at least 3–4 questions that can help gather the necessary information. The first two steps are provided along with guiding questions. There is also a completed example.

**Step 1 – Identify the Problem or Need**

- What is the main decision to be made?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What problem are you trying to solve?
- What are your goals or priorities?

**Step 2 – Gather Information**

- What facts or details do you need to know before deciding?
- What options are available?
- Who could you talk to for advice or more information?
- What reliable sources could you use?

### **Example (Already Filled In)**

Scenario: You've been offered more hours at your job, but it will take away from your social time and extracurricular activities.

Step 1 – Identify the Problem or Need (Questions I Could Ask):

1. What's my main goal—saving money, gaining experience, or keeping my free time?
2. How important are my current activities to me right now?
3. Am I feeling stressed or overwhelmed with my current schedule?

Step 2 – Gather Information (Questions I Could Ask):

1. How many extra hours would I be working each week?
2. How much additional money would I earn?
3. What would I have to give up in order to work more?
4. Could I work extra hours temporarily instead of long-term?

### **Student Practice Scenarios**

1. Class Selection: You can take an AP class that will look good for college, but it's a lot of work, or an elective you're passionate about but is less challenging.
2. Overloaded Schedule: You're on a sports team and in a club, but you've been asked to join another activity you're interested in.
3. Part-Time Job vs. Free Time: You've been offered more hours at your job, but it will take away from your social time and extracurricular activities.
4. Big Purchase Decision: You've saved \$400—do you spend it on a new gaming console, save it for a car, or use it for experiences like concerts?
5. Summer Job or Internship: You can work a summer job for money, or take an unpaid internship in a field you might want to work in someday.
6. College vs. Trade School: You're not sure if you should apply to a 4-year college or attend a trade school with quicker entry into the workforce.
7. Choosing Between Two Colleges: One is more affordable but farther from home; the other has your preferred program but is much more expensive.
8. Gap Year Decision: You're considering taking a year off after high school to work, travel, or volunteer before starting college.

**Your Scenario Selection \_\_\_\_\_**

Step 1 – Identify the Problem or Need (Questions I Could Ask):

Step 2 – Gather Information (Questions I Could Ask):

### **E. Reflection and Discussion Question**

1. How can asking better questions help you avoid mistakes in decision-making?

### **F. Extension Activities/Helpful Resources**

Select another scenario in Part D and create questions for Steps 1 and 2.

Your Scenario Selection \_\_\_\_\_

Step 1 – Identify the Problem or Need (Questions I Could Ask):

Step 2 – Gather Information (Questions I Could Ask):



[Decision Making Process](#) (UMASS Dartmouth)