

# Decision Making

Now that you have worked through some of the inaccurate things you may have believed about careers, it is time to look at decision making and goal setting. Think about how you tend to make decisions. What are some decisions you have made in the past. Look at the four headings below and try to list at least 3 decisions that you have made in the following ways.

◆ I decide on these intuitively or by instinct. I somehow just know how to decide.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

◆ I decide on these in a planful, logical manner.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

◆ I let other people decide on these.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

◆ I get confused or paralyzed and can't make a decision on these.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Do you see any patterns in the four categories above? Was it easy to place decisions in some categories and difficult in others? Why?

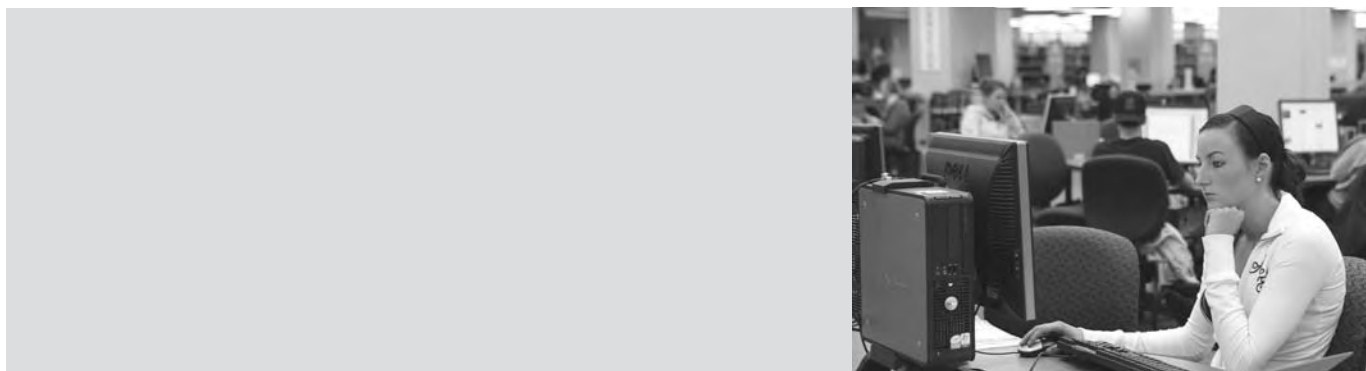
Are bigger decisions in some categories and smaller ones in others? Why?

Where do you place deciding on a career or major?

Not every decision needs to be made in a precise, logical, and planful manner. You don't need to spend 2 hours deciding whether to have pizza or tacos for supper. For many people, however, it is usually a good idea to be planful about larger decisions, such as deciding on a career or major. Some people do make career decisions intuitively, they just seem to know what they want to do. Personality studies have estimated that 75 percent of the population prefers logical decision making and 25 percent prefer more intuitive, creative approaches. Most of the time, it isn't evident these people really have done the work behind the scenes. They know their skills, abilities, interests and values, and then they used this knowledge to find a career that "feels right". They may have been planful but might not have known it.

Some people look to others to decide on a career for them. Remember, you know yourself better than anyone else knows you, so this is a decision you can make for yourself. Other people get confused or paralyzed when making a career decision. There can be many reasons for this, but one is that they are afraid to take the risk of making a decision. They feel if they make a decision, they are cutting off all other options and that can be scary. Decision making involves risk and uncertainty. Evaluating alternatives is a way to alleviate some feelings of risk. That is why you are encouraged to research careers, do informational interviews, job shadow, and take a course in your proposed major. Even with all of this information, you cannot know all possible outcomes of your decision and it can still feel risky. Sometimes the decision isn't quite as risky as it seems. Think about it. What if you choose a major and find you don't like it? What if you work at a job for a year and aren't happy? What are some options you would have at that point? Could you use your skills to do something else? Could you get some further training to change your career? Do you know people who are working in fields completely different from what they majored in? Do you know people who have changed careers? Are they happy? If you still feel paralyzed and can't make a decision, look back at the career myths earlier in this section or talk about your fears with a friend or counselor.

How do you make big decisions? Write the steps you take to make big decisions below. Some examples of big decisions might be deciding which college to attend, deciding to take a job, making a large purchase like a car, or deciding to move away from home.



## Decision Making: The Process

It usually helps people who are facing large decisions to look at a step-by-step process. The decision-making process involves using what you know (or can learn) to get what you want. The steps below show what is involved in making a well-considered decision.

- I. **Recognize and define the decision to be made.** This sounds easy, but it is good to be specific about what you want to decide.
- II. **Know what is important to you and what you want to attain or accomplish.** Look in the values section of this book to help you with this.
- III. **Examine the information you already have and seek and utilize new information.** This is what you did when you researched careers and talked to people like faculty members and people employed in fields of interest.
- IV. **Identify the alternatives that are available.** You made a prioritized list of careers that might fit for you on page 10. You may be able to shorten your list now. The remaining careers are your alternatives.
- V. **Assess the risks and costs involved in choosing each alternative.** Many people like to make a list of pros and cons.
- VI. **Choose among alternatives.** This is the hard part. Look at the costs and risks. Which option seems best? Pretend you have made your decision for a day and live with it. How does it feel?
- VII. **Develop a plan or strategy for attaining what you want.** The goal setting section that is next will help you with this step.
- VIII. **Review the decision.** This is VERY important. If you live with a decision for awhile and realize it isn't right for you, go back through the process and make a new decision. It is better to be honest with yourself and re-evaluate than to be unhappy with a long-term decision.

How did your decision making plan compare? Did you have other steps that would be more helpful to you, or were you missing steps? Where are you at in your career decision making process? Write below what you have done already in your career decision making process and what you need to do.