

Career Decision-Making

People make decisions in many ways depending on circumstances, personality, the importance of the decision, available resources, and how they've made decisions in the past. There's no one right way to make a decision, so find what works for you.

Two major ways to make decisions sit at either end of a continuum. Both can be positive ways to make important decisions.



Logical/Rationale

Makes sense

Logical, reasoning decision-making includes strategies like listing the pros and cons to analyse and contrast options.

Putting the information down on paper often allows a fresh perspective on the problem.

(AMUNDSON, 2003, P. 198)

Intuitive/Emotive

Feels right

Intuitive decision-making includes reflecting on what's important to you and how you feel about your options - your 'gut feel'.

'Feeling right' about a decision can be the most critical factor in the decision-making process.

(AMUNDSON, 2003, P. 201)

AMUNDSON, N. (2003) ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT: ENHANCING THE CAREER COUNSELLING PROCESS. RICHMOND BC: ERGON COMMUNICATIONS.

How do you make decisions?

Reflect on your decision-making style. Think about your previous decisions. Where does your decision-making style fit on the continuum? Have you used a logical reasoning approach, an intuitive approach or a combination?

Think of a decision that you've been pleased with. List the strategies you used. Could you use similar strategies for career decision-making?

Is having a clear decision the best?

Many students get confused about their career direction and think they must know where they're going after graduation. Sometimes, it seems everyone on campus knows what to do except you (*this is not true!*).

Being logical and making quick and clear decisions is highly valued in western culture but it may not always be the best approach. Being undecided may be valuable.

Research suggests using *a combination of logical reasoning and intuitive approaches* for effective decision-making. We need to be intuitive and open minded in a complex and changing world, but we need a sense of direction, so we must also be logical and informed.

Sometimes the best decision is to not make a decision, perhaps until more information is gathered or circumstances improve. Waiting until the end of first year so you get a taste of a range of courses before choosing your major will probably lead to a better decision than committing to a major in your first weeks at university. Don't make a hasty decision just for the sake of making a decision.

Guidelines for making good career decisions

Decision-making is a process and there are times when you don't need to have everything 'worked out' in order to move forward.

(AMUNDSON, 2003, P. 1971)

- Try to have a sense of direction or a 'theme' to guide your career. This gives you focus but helps you keep an open mind.
- Be consistent with your values and goals.
- Use both a logical (makes sense) and intuitive (feels right) approach to decision-making.
- Draw on the skills gained in making important past decisions. Use what works for you.
- Don't be rushed into a decision to please someone else.
- Don't make it difficult for yourself by trying to decide too early, trying to make the perfect decision, or forcing yourself because you think you should know.
- Try different options and gather information before deciding.

Reference

AMUNDSON, N. (2003) ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT: ENHANCING THE CAREER COUNSELLING PROCESS. RICHMOND BC: ERGON COMMUNICATIONS