

# Exploring Leadership

## PROBLEM SOLVING: DECISION MAKING

We make decisions every day, some small and some life-changing. While small choices may not require much thought, bigger decisions often need time, information, and careful thinking. Good decision-making is more than choosing quickly. It means slowing down, looking at your options, gathering information, and thinking about possible outcomes before deciding what to do.

### CONVERSATION STARTER:

Think about a time you made a quick decision without fully thinking it through. What happened? Would you make the same choice again?

Strong decision-makers understand that every choice can lead to consequences. The more informed and thoughtful you are, the more confident and prepared you will be when challenges arise.

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Practice gathering and evaluating information before making decisions
- Consider possible outcomes, trade-offs, and consequences before choosing an option

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Printed scenario cards (Appendix)
- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- Optional: calculators

## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

In this activity, participants will practice decision-making by thinking through different choices and outcomes.

- Divide participants into groups of 2–4.
- Give each group paper and pencils or pens, along with a Round One scenario card (see Appendix).
- Have participants discuss the scenario and make the best decision they can based on the information they have.
- Give groups a few minutes to discuss their options and decide which choice they would make. Have them write down their decision and the reason for it on the paper.
- Next, give groups the matching Round Two information card and optional calculators for budgeting and cost comparisons. Groups must decide whether to keep their original decision or change it based on the new information. Have them write down their final decision and reasoning on the paper.
- After groups make their decision, have groups present their original decision and explain whether they changed it or kept it. Encourage participants to explain what information influenced their thinking and why they decided to stay with or change their original choice.

### FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Do not reveal the Round Two information too early. Let groups commit to their first decision before introducing new details
- Encourage participants to explain why they made their choices.
- Avoid treating any option as the “correct” answer. Focus on trade-offs and consequences.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How did the new information change your thinking or strategy?
- Was it difficult to change your decision after learning more? Why or why not?
- What information had the biggest impact on your decision?
- Was there one “best” answer, or could different choices still make sense? Why?

## APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Why is it important to gather information before making a big decision?
- How can thinking about possible consequences help you make better choices in the future?
- How do priorities, opinions, or trade-offs affect decisions in real life?
- Who are some people or resources you can go to when you need help making a decision?



## CONCLUSION:

Good decisions rarely happen by accident. They happen when people take time to think, ask questions, and consider their options carefully. Learning to slow down and think things through can help you avoid problems, reach your goals, and make better choices in school, relationships, and life. Even small decisions can lead to big consequences, which is why strong leaders learn to think before they act.

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## REFERENCES

- All Study Journal: Decision Making and Problem Solving: <https://www.allstudyjournal.com/article/611/3-3-56-155.pdf>
- FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin: The Big 4: <https://leb.fbi.gov/image-repository/the-big-4.jpeg/view>
- Tennessee Tech University: Examples of Measurable Goals and Objectives: <https://www.tntech.edu/index.php>



## APPENDIX:

Instructions: Print and cut apart the cards. Each scenario includes a Round One card and a matching Round Two card. Give each group a Round One card first. After groups discuss and make their first decision, give them the matching Round Two card to continue the activity.

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### Scenario 1: Class Trip – Round One

Your class of 12 students is planning a fun trip with a budget of \$300.

Choose one option:

- Water park 2 hours away – \$25 per person
- Science museum downtown – \$15 per person
- Movie theater – \$15 per person

Your goal is to choose the option that gives the best overall trip experience while staying within budget.

Discuss which option your group would choose and why.

### Scenario 1: Class Trip – Round Two

New information:

- The water park tickets are non-refundable.
- The water park may close because of the weather.
- Bus transportation to the water park costs \$120 for the group.
- The science museum includes a free lunch for everyone.
- Public transportation to the science museum costs \$2 per person.
- The science museum includes a special interactive exhibit that ends this month.
- Transportation to the movie theater costs \$20 for the group.
- There is a pizza place next to the movie theater where dinner costs \$5 per person.
- Some students think the movie theater is not special enough for a class trip.
- Popcorn costs \$8 per person, and candy costs \$4 per person at any activity.
- Different students may prefer different activities.

You may now change your decision or keep your original one. Discuss which option gives the best overall experience and which extras, if any, are worth the cost.

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### Scenario 2: Buying a Gaming System – Round One

You saved \$400 for a gaming system.

Choose one option:

- Newest console – \$400
- Older used console – \$200
- Handheld gaming system – \$250

Your goal is to choose the option that gives the best overall value while staying within budget.

Discuss which option your group would choose and why.

### Scenario 2: Buying a Gaming System – Round Two

New information:

- The newest console does not include games (which are \$70 each), and you may need an extra controller that costs \$60.
- A yearly online gaming subscription for the newest console costs \$70.
- The newest console may stay updated longer and become outdated less quickly.
- Most of your friends play on the newest console.
- The older used console comes with 5 games and an extra controller, but it does not have online gaming access.
- The handheld system has cheaper games (\$30 each), better battery life, and is portable.
- The handheld system has a smaller screen and less powerful graphics.
- A carrying case for the handheld system costs \$25.
- Optional gaming headphones cost \$40 for any system.
- Different players may care more about graphics, portability, or playing with friends online.

You may now change your decision or keep your original one. Discuss which option gives the best overall gaming experience and which extras, if any, are worth the cost.



## APPENDIX:

### Scenario 3: Getting a Pet – Round One

Your family says you can get a pet with a budget of \$200.

Choose one option:

- 10-week-old puppy – \$120
- One-year-old dog from the shelter – \$70
- Small pet hamster – \$25

Your goal is to choose the option that would be the best fit for your family while staying within budget. Discuss which option your group would choose and why.

### Scenario 3: Getting a Pet – Round Two

New information:

- The puppy needs \$75 in vaccinations and also needs house training.
- The puppy may require more time and attention during the day.
- The shelter dog is already house trained, has vaccines, and comes with supplies.
- The shelter dog may already know basic commands and be easier to care for.
- The hamster cage and supplies cost another \$60.
- The hamster needs less space and costs less to feed.
- Optional toys and treats for any pet cost another \$20.
- Different family members may want different kinds of pets.

You may now change your decision or keep your original one. Discuss which pet would be the best fit for your family and which extras, if any, are worth the cost.

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### Scenario 4: Concert Tickets – Round One

You have \$255 for concert tickets for you and your friend.

Choose one option:

- Front-row tickets – \$110 each
- Regular seats – \$60 each
- Outdoor lawn seating – \$30 each

Choose the ticket option your group thinks is the best overall choice while staying within budget. Be prepared to explain why you chose it.

### Scenario 4: Concert Tickets – Round Two

New information:

- You need transportation to the concert. Parking costs \$30 total, or public transportation costs \$5 per person.
- Concert souvenir merchandise costs \$40 per person.
- Snacks and drinks at the concert cost \$20 per person.
- Front-row tickets include the best view and experience.
- Lawn seating may be affected by weather and may be farther from the stage.
- You may also want to consider bringing more friends, which would increase ticket, transportation, food, and souvenir costs.
- One friend cares most about getting the best concert experience, while the other wants to save money for food and souvenirs.
- Different people in your group may care more about price, comfort, or the overall experience.

You may now change your decision or keep your original one. Discuss which extras, if any, are worth the cost and why.



## APPENDIX:

### Scenario 5: New Phone - Round One

You want a new phone with a budget of \$500.

Choose one option:

- Newest phone model – \$425
- Last year's model – \$300
- Refurbished phone – \$200

Your goal is to choose the phone that gives the best overall value while staying within budget. Discuss which one your group would choose and why.

### Scenario 5: New Phone - Round Two

New information:

- The newest phone needs a \$50 case and a \$15 screen protector.
- Last year's model has nearly the same features, but also needs a \$40 case and a \$10 screen protector.
- The refurbished phone includes a screen protector and only needs a \$20 case.
- The newest phone has the best camera and newest features.
- The newest phone is currently backordered and may take 3 weeks to arrive.
- The refurbished phone has a limited warranty, shorter battery life, and no waterproof protection.
- The refurbished phone may also need a battery replacement sooner.
- Optional phone insurance costs \$12 per month for any phone.
- Wireless earbuds cost \$80 for any phone.
- Different people may care more about price, features, reliability, or having the newest technology.

You may now change your decision or keep your original one. Discuss which extras, if any, are worth the cost.

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### Scenario 6: School Fundraiser - Round One

Your group of 8 students needs to raise money for a school activity with a budget of \$50.

Choose one option:

- Sell pizza at lunch
- Run 3 carnival-style game booths
- Hold a bake sale

Your goal is to choose the best fundraiser option while staying within budget. Discuss which one your group would choose and why.

### Scenario 6: School Fundraiser - Round Two

New information:

- Selling pizza would cost \$70 for ingredients. Pizza slices would sell for \$3 each, and you expect to sell about 60 slices.
- Running the game booths would require \$40 for prizes and supplies. Each game would cost \$2 to play, and you expect about 75 people to participate.
- The bake sale would not have supply costs because volunteers would provide the baked goods. Baked items would sell for \$2 each, and you expect to sell about 55 items. However, the bake sale depends on whether enough volunteers are willing to help.
- Posters and decorations for any fundraiser would cost \$10.
- Any fundraiser will require time for setup, advertising, and cleanup. Some students in your group may not have extra time to help after school.

You may now change your decision or keep your original one.