The Decision Quality Check

A practical framework for making clearer decisions when you don't have perfect information.

Clarity does not require certainty.

You don't need to know exactly what will happen. You need to understand the decision, the assumptions you're making, the downside you're accepting, and what comes next.

How to use this

Work through one real decision. Write plainly. A few useful sentences beat a page of explanations. Compare serious options, including doing nothing when that's a real choice.

Print it or save a copy and type into the fields in a PDF reader. Save a separate copy for each decision. Your notes stay in the file you keep; this worksheet doesn't send them to the website. Leave out private details if you plan to share it.

Give expensive or hard-to-undo decisions more scrutiny. For smaller decisions you can reverse, use the prompts without turning them into a project. If a field isn't relevant, say why. Use extra notes if you need them.

The decision I want to work through

1 Define the actual decision

Start with: What decision am I actually making?

Make it specific enough to decide.

Too broad: Should I leave my job?

More useful: Am I willing to leave my current role for this specific opportunity, given its compensation, scope, location, risk, and potential upside?

Too broad: How do I fix my team?

More useful: What behavior, process, capacity issue, or expectation is producing the outcome I'm trying to change?

My actual decision in one or two sentences

The outcome I want to change

When does this need to be decided, and why?

Separate an actual deadline from pressure that only feels urgent.

2 Facts, interpretation, unknowns

Don't let an assumption quietly become a fact.

What I know

Confirmed facts, available data, documented information, explicit statements, or things that have happened.

What I think

My interpretations, assumptions, predictions, expectations, and conclusions.

What I don't know

Information I genuinely do not have.

What am I treating as true that I haven't confirmed?

3 Identify the real constraints

What is actually limiting my options?

Consider time, money, capacity, people, authority, skills, information, politics, family, location, risk tolerance, and what another choice would cost you.

My major constraints

Name the few that matter to this decision.

Which are real, and what confirms them?

Which am I imposing on myself?

What am I assuming I can't do? Is that actually fixed?

What can I change, negotiate, or work around?

4 Make the trade-offs visible

Every meaningful choice has a cost. You don't need a score to see it.

Compare the options you'd actually consider. Leaving things as they are can be one of them. Use the same questions for each.

Option A: What would I choose?

What gets better? What gets worse? What am I giving up? What becomes possible?

Option B: What would I choose?

What gets better? What gets worse? What am I giving up? What becomes possible?

4 Trade-offs continued

Use this page for a third option, or to look again at what you're accepting.

Option C: What would I choose?

What gets better? What gets worse? What am I giving up? What becomes possible?

The trade-off I need to be honest about

Which cost am I tempted to minimize or ignore?

5 Protect the downside

If I'm wrong, what happens?

The downside that matters most

How bad could it be? Who else would be affected?

Can I reverse this decision?

What's easy to undo? What's expensive, difficult, or impossible to undo?

What would recovery look like?

Include time, money, support, and options that would still be available.

How can I reduce the downside before acting?

Could I test a smaller version, confirm a condition, or keep a fallback?

What risk am I willing to accept, and what's my limit?

6 Get information that matters

What information would actually change my choice?

If I learned this tomorrow, I would choose differently

Name the information and explain how it would change the decision.

Can I realistically get it?

From whom, by when, and at what cost? If it's available and matters, get it.

If I can't get it, how will I handle that uncertainty?

Adjust the risk, narrow the commitment, or decide what you will watch.

Research or avoidance?

Do I need more information, or am I delaying a decision I already understand well enough to make?

My answer, and the point where I will stop researching

7 Decide, execute, watch the data

Make the decision based on what you know today.

My decision

Why this is the best decision based on what I know today

What I will do next

What I will watch

What would cause me to reconsider or adjust

When I will review this decision

Adjust when the data changes. Don't reopen the decision only because acting feels uncomfortable.

Before you act

Decision quality isn't outcome certainty.

- [ ] I can clearly state the decision.
- [ ] I know which information is fact versus assumption.
- [ ] I understand my major constraints.
- [ ] I understand the trade-offs I am accepting.
- [ ] I know what happens if I'm wrong.
- [ ] I know whether the decision is reversible.
- [ ] There isn't reasonably available information that would materially change my choice.
- [ ] I know what happens next.

If those answers are clear, you probably have enough information to act.

Decision quality and outcome quality

A good decision can produce a bad outcome. A bad decision can occasionally produce a good outcome. Judge the decision by what you knew at the time, the reasoning you used, the risks you understood, and the trade-offs you accepted. What happens next still gives you information to learn from.

Checking every box doesn't guarantee a good outcome. This is a tool for thinking clearly, not a prediction or a substitute for qualified advice when the stakes require it.

Becoming the Blueprint

This framework is part of the larger work: understanding systems, taking ownership, and building a path based on reality.

Understand the system. Build your path. Become the Blueprint.