KESTON SCHOOL

HUMAN BEHAVIOR · FREE SAMPLE

Better Decisions Faster

Simple tools to make everyday choices with confidence and less delay

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will know how much effort each decision deserves, have a one-page way to frame any choice, a quick scoring method for close calls, a deadline habit that ends the stalling, and a few personal rules that make routine choices for you.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Better Decisions Faster Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CHAPTER 1

Stuck at the Fork

Recognize your own decision pattern, see why the usual advice keeps you stuck, and take stock of every choice you are carrying.

It is Sunday evening and you have three browser tabs open. One is a laptop you have been comparing for two weeks. One is an email from a recruiter you still have not answered. One is a group chat where four friends are waiting for you to say whether you can make the trip in March. None of these is a life-or-death choice. Together, they sit on your chest like a stack of unpaid bills.

You close the laptop and tell yourself you will decide tomorrow, when you are fresh. You said the same thing last Sunday.

The pile you are carrying

Most of us do not have one big decision problem. We have a pile. Small choices that should take ten minutes stretch into weeks. Medium choices get pushed until a deadline forces them. Big choices get made in a rush at the last moment, or they get made for us because we waited too long.

The pile has a strange quality: it grows heavier the longer it sits. A choice you have been avoiding for a month feels bigger than the same choice on the first day, even though nothing about it has changed. Each time you look at it and walk away, you teach yourself that it is hard.

This book is about clearing the pile and keeping it small. Not by making you a perfect decision-maker, because there is no such thing, but by giving you a few simple tools that match the size of each choice and get you to a clear answer sooner.

Three patterns

Watch how you handle choices for a week and you will probably notice one of three patterns. Most people use all three, but one usually dominates.

The stall. You research, compare, read reviews, ask around and then research some more. The decision always seems one more piece of information away. Stallers are often thoughtful and careful. Their problem is not a lack of thinking but the lack of a stopping point.

The snap. You decide fast to make the discomfort go away. You buy the first option that looks fine, say yes to the request before you have checked your calendar, or accept the offer on the call because asking for time feels awkward. Snappers are often decisive and energetic. Their problem is that speed replaces thinking even when the stakes are high.

The outsource. You hand the decision to someone else, out loud or quietly. You ask your partner to pick the restaurant, poll five friends about the apartment, or wait to see what your manager prefers. Outsourcers are often considerate and collaborative. Their problem is that they never build trust in their own judgment, and they sometimes end up living with choices that fit someone else.

None of these is a character flaw. Each is a reasonable way to reduce the discomfort of choosing. The trouble is that each works only for certain decisions, and most people use their favorite pattern for everything.

> **Key idea:** Good deciders are not people who always choose well. They are people who match how they decide to what the decision actually needs.

Why the usual advice fails

There are two classic pieces of advice about decisions. Both have some truth in them, and both break down when used on their own.

Go with your gut. Your gut, meaning the quick sense of what feels right, is useful. It draws on experience you cannot always put into words. But it is also easily swayed by how tired you are, what you saw most recently, and what feels familiar. For a choice you have made many times before, the gut is often enough. For a new or high-stakes choice, it is a useful voice, not the final vote.

Make a list of pros and cons. Lists feel rigorous. In practice, they often stall. Every item looks equally important on the page, so a minor con like “the color is a bit dull” sits next to a major pro like “it fits my budget.” People end up counting items instead of weighing them, then adding more items when the count feels wrong. The list grows, and the decision does not move.

What both pieces of advice lack is structure around the choice: how much effort it deserves, what exactly you are deciding, what matters most, and when you will stop. That structure is what the rest of this book gives you.

What changes when you decide well

When people start using simple decision tools, a few things tend to happen. The small choices disappear quickly, because they get the small amount of thought they deserve. The medium choices get made in days instead of weeks. And the big choices get proper attention without becoming a fog that follows you around.

There is also a quieter benefit. Each decision you make clearly and on time builds a little more trust in yourself. You start to notice that most of your choices turn out fine, and the ones that do not can usually be adjusted. That trust makes the next decision easier.

Try this

Over the next three days, make a **decision inventory**. Take a sheet of paper or open the first page of your workbook and write down every decision you are currently carrying, big or small. Include the ones you keep pushing to "later": the purchase, the reply, the plan, the conversation about whether to change something.

Next to each one, write three things:

1. How long it has been open, roughly.
2. Your usual pattern for this kind of choice: stall, snap or outsource.
3. A rough sense of how big it really is: small, medium or large.

Do not try to decide anything yet. Just get it all on paper. Most people find between eight and twenty open decisions, and many are surprised by how many are small ones that have been sitting for weeks.

Keep the list. You will use it in nearly every chapter. Next, we look at what actually happens in your head when you face a choice, and why some decisions feel so much harder than they are.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Most people lean on one of three patterns - stall, snap or outsource.
- Gut feel and pros-and-cons lists both fail when used alone.
- Writing down every open decision is the first step to clearing them.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 Stuck at the Fork

Take stock of every decision you are carrying before you change anything.

FILL IN

My decision inventory

Decision	Open how long	Pattern	Size S/M/L

CHECKLIST

My usual patterns

- [ ] The stall: I keep researching
- [ ] The snap: I decide fast to end the discomfort
- [ ] The outsource: I let others choose for me

RATE IT

How heavy does my pile of open decisions feel right now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 · Light

10 · Crushing

The kind of decision I stall on most, and the kind I tend to rush:

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Better Decisions Faster and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 Stuck at the Fork

02 How Choices Really Happen

03 The Price of Not Deciding

04 Match Effort to Stakes

05 Name the Real Choice

06 Score What Matters

07 Decide by a Deadline

08 Four Everyday Decisions

09 When You Still Can't Choose

10 Rules That Decide for You

11 Living With Your Choices

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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