

Decisions

by Adrian Doff

Level: Intermediate and above

Time: 20 minutes

Aim: – To talk about people deciding to do and not to do things.
– To talk about decisions you have made.
– To say whether people are good at making decisions.

There are three ways of using this worksheet:

- Give the worksheet to students to work through independently, and then in the next lesson go through the exercises and deal with any points that arise.
- Use the worksheet for an active classroom lesson. The notes below give ideas for doing this.
- Do not give the worksheet out in class but use it as the basis for your own lesson, getting ideas and phrases from the students and presenting language on the board (use the notes below to help you). Then give out the worksheet at the end, and ask students to do the exercises for homework.

Warm-up

Warm-up: Establishing the concept

Write on the board:

I decided... ... decision

Ask students to suggest sentences that might include each of these words. If you like, use this to establish the basic patterns *decide (not) to do something* and *make/take a decision*.

Larger classes: Do this as pairwork, then ask a few students to tell you what sentences they thought of.

Give out the worksheet.

Worksheet

Language focus

1. Examples A and B: Read through the examples, and ask a few questions to check comprehension and focus on the key language (possible answers in brackets):

- How are the man and the woman different? (She's decisive; he isn't. She can take quick decisions; he can't. He changes his mind a lot; she doesn't. Meetings with her are quick; with him they were slow.)
- Who is a better boss? (She is.) Why? (Because she is more efficient, she gets things done quickly.)

Do you know anyone in your company who is like A or like B?

Larger classes: Pairwork: Students tell their partner what they wrote. Then ask some students to tell you what they found out from their partner.

2. decide (not) to: Read the examples, and point out how we use the verb *decide*.

To practise, give cues, and ask students to make sentences with *decided to* or *decided not to*, e.g.

- I thought, 'I'll go home' → I decided to go home.
- I thought, 'I won't work late today' → I decided not to work late.

Ask a few students to tell you something they decided to do or not to do recently (not necessarily connected with work).

3. decision: Read the examples, and point out that *take a decision* and *make a decision* mean the same. Check that students can pronounce 'decision'.

Look at the adjectives used with *decision*. Give a few examples to focus on the meaning, e.g.

- You decide to start a new career. What kind of decision is that? Is it difficult? Easy? Important? Why?
- Think about the president/prime minister. Does he/she have to take tough decisions? Tell me a tough decision he/she took recently. Was it the right decision?
- You see a coat in a shop, and you buy it immediately. What kind of decision is that?

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4. **make up your mind, change your mind:** Read the examples. Point out that *can't decide* and *haven't decided* are often followed by *Wh-* words + *to*. Ask students to give some other *Wh-* words (*when, where, what, how, who*).

To practise, give cues and ask students to make sentences with *I can't decide* or *I couldn't decide*, e.g.:

- Shall I buy flowers or chocolates? → I couldn't decide what to buy.
- Shall we go to cinema or to a restaurant? → We couldn't decide where to go.
- Shall I phone her or not? → I can't decide whether to phone her.

4. **can't decide:** Give situations about yourself to show how these phrases are used, e.g.

- I want to go out tonight, but I also need to stay at home and finish some work. (*I can't make up my mind* – shall I go out or not?)
- I was in a café, I decided to have an espresso. But then I thought, 'No, maybe I'll have a cappuccino.' (*I changed my mind*)

Ask students to suggest situations where it's sometimes difficult to make up your mind, e.g. in a restaurant, planning to see a film, in a clothes shop, buying a present for someone.

Ask them if they often change their mind in these situations. Use this to introduce the phrases:

- stick to (or keep to) a decision
- go back on a decision
- a decisive person
- an indecisive person

Ask students if they think they are *decisive* or *indecisive* (you could ask them to put up their hands – anyone who doesn't know is indecisive!). Ask a few students to give examples of how they are decisive or indecisive.

Practice

1. Talk or write:

Students write sentences. Then ask them to read out what they have written.

Alternative: Give students a few moments to think about a recent decision, and possibly make a few notes. Then ask them in turn to tell you about it.

Larger classes: Do this as pairwork, then ask a few students what they said.

2. Exercise:

Do the exercises together round the class; or let students do it alone or in pairs, then go through it together.

Answers:

- I wanted to go into banking, but now I've changed my mind. I've decided to look for a job in advertising instead.
- I'm so indecisive. It takes me ages to write emails, because I can never make up my mind what to write.
- After three days of talks, the management finally reached a decision. They decided not to close the factory. 'This was a very difficult decision,' the CEO said last night, but we believe it is the right one.
- I saw the job advertised in the paper, and immediately decided to apply for it. It was a spontaneous decision.
- We're looking for someone who can take tough decisions and keep to them.

Other language areas you could explore:

1. determined

- *be determined to do something; a determined person; be full of determination*

2. taking decisions

- *I'll...; I won't...; I think I'll...; I don't think I'll...*
- *Let's...; Why don't we...? How about...?*
- *I think we should...; I propose that we...*


3. asking for a decision

- *Shall we...? What/Where/Who shall we...?*

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BUSINESS & ESP WORKSHEET

A



'Our old boss was a very **indecisive** person. He could never **decide** what to do and he often **changed his mind**. Meetings used to go on for hours because we could never **come to a decision** about anything.'

B



'Our new boss is a very **decisive** person. She **makes clear, quick decisions** and she **keeps to** them – she almost never **changes her mind**. Meetings never last for more than an hour, because we **reach decisions** so quickly.'

decide (not) to, decision

verb: **decide** After 10 years with the company, I **decided to** resign.
 noun: **decision** I didn't really want to resign from the company, so it was a very difficult **decision**.

You **take** or **make a decision**: As CEO of the company, she often has to **take** tough **decisions**.
 It's good that you resigned - I'm sure you **made** the right **decision**.

take	a difficult	decision
make	a tough	
	an important	

take	a clear	decision
make	a quick	
	a spontaneous	

take	the right	decision
make	the wrong	

After thinking or talking for a long time, you **reach** or **come to a decision**.
 After five hours of discussion, the board of directors finally **reached a decision**.
 They're considering opening an office in Dubai, but they haven't **come to a** definite **decision** yet.

can't decide

can't decide	what	to...
haven't decided	whether...	
They haven't decided yet whether to open an office in Dubai. I'm giving a presentation tomorrow, but I can't decide what to wear.		

make up your mind, change your mind

make up your mind = definitely decide something after thinking about it carefully
change your mind = decide something, and then decide something different

I've **made up my mind**. I'm resigning from the company (= it's my final decision).
 Once he has decided something, he never **changes his mind**.


We can also say: He **keeps to** or **sticks to** his decisions.
 He doesn't **go back on** his decisions.

Adjectives:

a **decisive** person = someone who makes decisions and sticks to them
 an **indecisive** person = someone who keeps changing his/her mind

Exercise

Fill each gap with one word from the box. Some words may be used more than once.

Talk or write 

Think about a decision you made at work. Was it the right decision? Was it a difficult decision? Did you take a long time to reach it? Did you change your mind? Write a few sentences about it.

- a) I wanted to go into banking, but now I've _____ my _____. I've _____ to look for a job in advertising instead.
- b) I'm so _____. It takes me ages to write emails, because I can never _____ my _____ what to write.
- c) After three days of talks, the management finally _____ a _____. They _____ not to close the factory. 'This was a very _____,' the CEO said last night, 'but we believe it is the _____ one.'
- d) I saw the job advertised in the paper, and immediately _____ to apply for it. It was a _____ _____.
- e) We're looking for someone who can _____ tough _____ and _____ to them.

- decided
- indecisive
- decision
- decisions
- reached
- changed
- keep
- take
- make up
- right
- difficult
- spontaneous
- mind