

Smart choices as we age: A practical guide to making better decisions

*Tips to support your everyday
decision-making through improved vision,
hearing, and management of information*



Our Project: Supporting Everyday Decisions

As we age, decisions can take more time and effort, even when we get them right. This extra effort can affect confidence, wellbeing, and willingness to stay mentally active.

What we are doing:

- Working with older adults to find practical ways to make decision-making easier
- Testing how changes like clearer information and reducing mental load can help
- We use experiments and interviews to understand both the results and the process of decision-making

Why this matters to you:

- Easier decisions mean more confidence, independence, and social activity
- Our goal is to share tips to make daily life smoother

Did you know? Cognitive tasks like making decisions and remembering aren't just in the mind - they're in the environment too. Strategies like note-taking, reminders, and clearer information can help.

Decision-Making: Your Daily Decisions

We make many decisions every day about food, health, activities, and more.

As we get older, decision-making can change.



We have more knowledge and experience...

... but our vision, hearing, and thinking skills can start to get worse.



If decisions start to feel more of an effort, there are simple steps that can help.

Making good decisions helps us stay safe, independent, confident, and socially connected.

Think of some decisions you made this week – what helped you decide?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Improving Vision

Our research shows that larger font size and **clearer information** boost older adults' decision-making performance by about 13%.

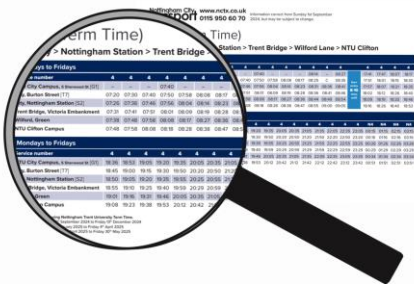
Try these strategies to see better when making decisions:



Wear the appropriate glasses!



Improve the lighting. Move to a window, turn on a lamp, or increase the screen brightness.



"I often use a magnifying glass, because some of the stuff is so pathetically small!"

Dave (84)



Improve the screen size or use your phone camera to zoom in on the details.

Improving Hearing

Good hearing can make decision-making easier:

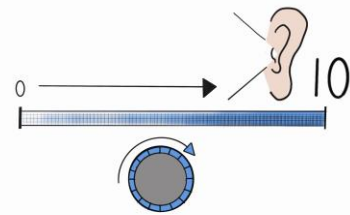
1. You're less likely to miss important information.
2. You don't have to put so much effort into understanding speech.

"You realise that you're straining to hear and therefore not really comprehending. You're not thinking about it in the same way because all the effort is going on hearing." Maureen (77)

Try these strategies to hear better when making decisions:



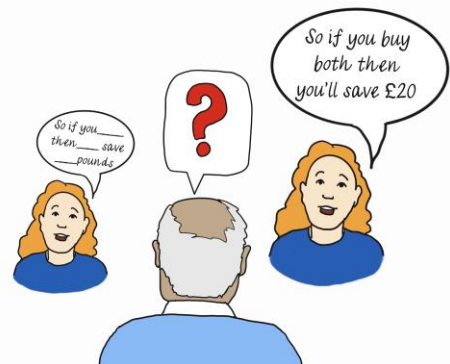
Have regular hearing checks to see if a hearing aid could help.



Turn up the volume.



Reduce background noise (e.g., turn down the TV).



Ask people to repeat things or to speak more slowly or loudly.

Signs of hearing loss:

- People seem to mumble
- Hard to follow conversations
- People complain that the TV is loud!

What to do next:

- Speak to your GP or an audiologist (hearing specialist)
- Talk openly with friends and family about your hearing

Managing Information

In our research, older adults who made the most annotations scored 26% higher in decision-making tasks than those who made the fewest.



“I find it useful to keep notes, and if I don’t have a pen handy when dealing with that information, I get a bit irritable”
Joan (75)



Try these strategies to manage information when making decisions:


- Make notes, highlight and cross out information
- Print out information
- Take photos of important information
- Use electronic devices (mobile phones, tablets, etc.) to take notes

Healthy Ageing and Cognition

Science has shown that small daily habits can support brain health as we age.

- **Mental Activity:** Try a puzzle or volunteer locally.
- **Exercise:** Take a short walk or do gentle movement daily.
- **Social Engagement:** Meet a friend, make a phone call, or join a community event.
- **Healthy Eating:** Eat brain-friendly foods like berries (e.g., blueberries), leafy greens (e.g., kale), and oily fish (e.g., salmon).

(Key & Szabo-Reed, 2023)

 Cut this out and keep it handy!

Jot down your thoughts on decision-making.

- One helpful tip:
- One thing I've learnt:
- One thing to try this week:

Feedback and Contact Information

We hope this guide helps you to create practical strategies to help your decision-making.

We'd love to hear your views on this booklet. You can give us feedback by going to <https://tinyurl.com/NTUBookletFeedback> or by scanning this QR code:



Are you aged 65 or over? Interested in supporting healthy ageing research? Join the Trent Ageing Panel today! Sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/TrentAgeingPanel> or email healthy.ageing@ntu.ac.uk


For more information and to download the digital booklet, visit our website: <https://tinyurl.com/NTUDecisions> or scan here:



Organisations and contacts:

Re-engage

7 Bell Yard, London, WC2A 2JR


 0800 716 543

<https://reengage.org.uk/contact/>



U3A (University of the Third Age)

156 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8EN

 020 8466 6139 |  national.office@u3a.org.uk