

The ten-minute decision

Use this page when one ordinary decision is taking up more space than it needs. Aim for a usable next move, not complete certainty.

First two minutes: write the decision in one sentence. Name the deadline, if there is a real one. Separate what you observed from what you fear might happen.

Next three minutes: identify what matters and the constraint you cannot ignore. Include anyone else whose time, privacy, money or agreement is involved.

Next three minutes: find at least two realistic options. An option may be asking a question, trying a smaller version, keeping things as they are, or deciding later with a clear reason.

Last two minutes: choose the smallest useful step. Set a review point and name one piece of information that could change your mind.

What am I deciding, and by when?

What do I know? What am I assuming?

What matters, and what limits my options?

What are two realistic options?

My next step, review date and reason to reconsider:

Example: agreeing too quickly

Fictional example. A friend asks Leila to help with an event on Saturday. Leila wants to help but already has two commitments and needs some recovery time.

Situation: the friend asked for "a hand" without saying how long. Leila assumes that saying no will damage the friendship. That is a fear, not something the friend has said.

What matters: friendship, keeping existing commitments, and rest. Constraint: the afternoon is already booked. Leila can offer a limited morning task only if the timing is clear.

Options: agree to the whole day; ask what is needed and offer one hour; or decline this time. Leila asks for details before deciding.

Request: "I can help from 10 to 11, but I cannot stay later. Is there a specific task that fits that hour? It is okay if you need someone who can stay all day."

Review: the friend needs help carrying supplies at 10. Leila confirms the one-hour limit and leaves as arranged. If the friend had needed a whole-day commitment, declining would still have been a valid outcome.

What changed: Leila replaced a vague agreement with a clear, limited offer. The worksheet did not establish the friend's motives or guarantee their reaction.