

---

# Making Group Decisions

---

## ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE...

**Objectives:** Encourage the youth to make group decisions; Learn skills they can apply to decisions later; Practice using the decision-making strategy they agreed upon

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Space:** Any space available that fits youth comfortably; may need to split into three groups

**Materials:** Three flip charts and markers

---

### Step 1

Break the large group into groups of five (if there are less than 10 participants, you can have the whole group work as one group). Then, using the “Different Decision Handout,” have each group select a decision-making strategy to practice.

### Step 2

Assign the group one of the following decisions to make:

- If the group had to choose a favorite ice cream flavor, what would it be?
- The group is ordering one huge pizza; choose the toppings (no half this, half that).
- Everyone is going on a day-long trip together. Where are you going to go?

Tell the groups they will have 15 minutes to come up with a decision. After the group(s) has had 5 minutes, stop them and ask how it’s going. Is there a better way to do this? Has everyone had a chance to speak? This may be a good time to introduce the facilitator’s tips on ensuring that everyone has a voice. After 20 minutes has passed (or less if they work quickly), ask the group(s) what their decision is.

### Step 3

Next, facilitate a discussion (or ask a youth to volunteer to facilitate) about their process. What was hard about coming to a decision? What made things easy? What would decision-making be like when the issues are more complex?

### Step 4

Review the “Different Decision” chart. Which method did each group apply to their decisions? Which approach does the group want to use when considering more challenging decisions?

# Making Group Decisions

Making group decisions can be tougher than you may expect. Often, people that are new to group decision-making, find it hard to open their minds to new ideas and come to a decision as a group. It is easy for the loudest voice overpower the rest of the group, or for members of the group to agree to an idea just for the sake of agreeing.

It is important to understand the different kinds of decision-making and build skills that will help you make decision as a group. Decision-making is the ultimate test in active listening and good communication skills.

Good decisions are made when:

- The group dedicates enough time to each issue and vows to look at it carefully.
- All members of the group are given a chance to communicate their opinions.
- Each person can support the decision

When working with groups, whether it is with youth or adults, it is often necessary to use special techniques to ensure that everyone has a voice. You may want to try one of the following:

- No one speaks twice until everyone has spoken once.
- Allow everyone in the group five minutes to compose their thoughts, take notes.
- Have each member write their ideas on a slip of paper, mix them together and have each member read aloud someone else's.

Using the “Different Decisions” chart, take time to discuss the diverse kinds of decision-making. What are the pros? What are the cons? How will your group make decisions in the future?

## Different Decisions

<p><b>Consensus</b></p>	<p>The group takes the time to understand all aspects of the issue at hand, especially each opposing opinion. A decision is only made when <b>everyone</b> in the group says that they can live with the group's decision.</p>
<p><b>Working Consensus</b></p>	<p>The group takes the time to understand all aspects of the issue at hand, especially each opposing opinion. The decision is made when <b>two-thirds</b> of the group says they can live with that decision.</p>
<p><b>Democratic</b></p>	<p>The group discusses the issue(s) satisfactorily, so that people understand the consequences of the majority vote. Ground rules are established so that the losers agree to support the majority decision, even if it is not their choice. Then the group must vote and count.</p>
<p><b>Advisory Group</b></p>	<p>The group appoints a team of experts to either make decisions for the group or make recommendations on decisions.</p>
<p><b>Leadership Team</b></p>	<p>The group forms a subgroup of leaders that represents the whole group. This group makes decisions.</p>
<p><b>Weighted</b></p>	<p>When the group is ready come to a decision, some members' voices and opinions are given more weight than other members' voices.</p>