

Decision Making

DECISION MAKING—A MENTAL PROCESS

Decision Making is a mental process undertaken by an individual for selection of a course of action among many available options. Decision making will result in a final choice. Decisions are always taken in the context of a set of needs.

In this type of questions, a given situation is followed by four options of the decision to be made.

These questions are based on real-life situations that IAS officers encounter routinely. They gauge your ability to deal with similar situations and arrive at the best decisions. Thus, these questions are designed to judge your analytical skills and your ability to resolve a problem.

The questions may deal with different situations like land acquisition for a proposed economic zone; hurdles in setting up a power generation unit, etc. You have to decide on the best possible option in the given situation. There is no fixed rule for arriving at a decision. Your answer depends on your analytical ability and also on your interpersonal skills.

The idea underlying this test is to evaluate your ability to take decisions logically for exigencies, contingencies and emergencies with appropriate management of people. Therefore, real life situations have been framed as questions, to test your skills in dealing with the hypothetical crisis presented to you in the form to a query.

Take care while solving such questions. Never make assumptions of your own for the examiner wants you to solve the given problem within the ambit of its original premises.

Remember, analytical ability is the best tool to deal with such situations. You always use your personal abilities to analyse any crisis. The examiner wants to know your solution to the problems that as a civil servant you may have to deal with on a daily basis. Decision Making is difficult due to multiple alternatives available and, risky consequence involved in a particular decision. There is uncertainty, as well as complexity, and a need to evaluate issues involved in any decision. A major challenge during decision making is to settle interpersonal issues.

STEP TECHNIQUE FOR DECISION MAKING

1. Identification of objectives.
2. Classification of objectives.
3. Analysis of alternative actions.
4. Evaluation of alternatives.
5. Decision evaluated with respect to consequences.
6. Hindrances in implementing the decision.

EFFECTIVE LISTENING FOR DECISION MAKING

Listening helps you not only in problem solving, but also in image building in front of the interview board or the community. An attentive and smart listener listens to the question with utmost

attention, answers it later on. This gives him/her enough time to recall the facts and figures to reply comprehensively. On the contrary, a poor listener never replies to a question properly. Thus, it is clear that listening is an ability that everyone must develop. Try the following steps to enhance your listening ability.

1. Pay attention to the speaker as long as he/she speaks. Make him/her feel that you are concentrating on him/her only and he/she is getting due attention. Try to show that you understand what he/she is trying to convey.
2. Try to make eye contact and observe the body language of the speaker. It will give you a chance to understand his/her posture as people often give out aggression or calmness through their body language.
3. Make the speaker feel that you are listening to him/her. You can use your body language and small verbal communication such as 'yeah', or nod your head positively.
4. If you find anything difficult or miss any important point, ask the speaker to repeat that only after he/she completes his/her point.
5. Give feedback but only when a speaker—who may be a professor, a complainant, a student or anyone else—asks after he/she finishes his/her point. Every speaker solicits some feedback after he/she finishes his/her lecture.
6. Remember, your feedback should be balanced as it will define your image in the eyes of the speaker. Therefore, do not exaggerate, or understate your opinion. Try to summarize it precisely.
7. Try to guess where the discourse is leading.

If you are attentive, well focused, and you pay attention to minute details, you will gradually develop the ability of a good listener. It will help you in making decisions in your career, in your office and in your daily life.

There are three aspects of listening.

1. Receiving information
2. Solving problem
3. Sharing with others

When you receive information, you must pay utmost attention so that you collect right information. Civil servants often have to deal with tricky situations while probing an important case. Suppose that you are an IPS officer and receive the information that a station house officer has indulged in corruption. As a district police chief, it is your responsibility to ensure action against the officer to solve the problem. But before taking any decision, you would like to investigate the truth behind the complaint. You will share it with some of your juniors and people in the area where the SHO is posted. So, your listening ability will come to your great help in your decision making.

EXERCISE

DIRECTIONS (QS. 1–35): Each item describes a situation and is followed by four possible responses. Indicate the response you find most appropriate. Choose only one response for each item. The responses will be evaluated based on the level of appropriateness for the given situation.

Please attempt all the items. There is no penalty for wrong answers for these items.

1. The section officer had forgotten to inform you about a meeting you are required to attend. You were absent on that day and have been sent a notice by the deputy secretary. You are on very good terms with the section officer and do not want to expose him. You would
 - (a) send a written reply offering some plausible excuse.
 - (b) seek an appointment with the deputy secretary.
 - (c) take the blame on yourself.
 - (d) get philosophical about the whole thing.
2. You have a flat in south Delhi which has been rented out. As the tenant was your friend, you did not sign a lease agreement. Your father is soon retiring and you have to vacate government quarters within six months. Unfortunately, the tenant is refusing to move out. You would
 - (a) report the matter to the police.
 - (b) hire goons to get him thrown out.
 - (c) file a case in the court.
 - (d) buckle under pressure and sell the property.
3. An important document is missing from the office. The papers were handed over to an assistant in the department for safe-keeping. You would
 - (a) suspend the assistant.
 - (b) give him a week's time to locate the document.
 - (c) Inform the headquarters
 - (d) get him removed from service
4. You are in-charge of handing out compensation to the victims of the High Court bomb blast in September, 2011. The families of the victims are not happy with the way in which compensation cases are being handled. They accuse you of malpractices. You would
 - (a) ask for an enquiry.
 - (b) ignore the allegations.
 - (c) refuse to work until matters are sorted out.
 - (d) ask your seniors to hand over the responsibility to some body else.
5. You have been asked to establish asbestos shelters for the poor. You have invited bids from contractors. Unfortunately the bids are above the approved rates. You would
 - (a) accept the lowest bid.
 - (b) call for new bids.
 - (c) refer the matter to your seniors.
 - (d) send new tenders with better specifications.
6. You are in charge of administering polio drops in your area. The work is almost done. Just as you take a breather you are informed that a certain house in your locality has still not received the drops. You are in a dilemma as stocks have been exhausted. You would
 - (a) arrange for the drops from another area.
 - (b) request the residents of that house to procure the drops privately.
 - (c) procure a fresh stock of vaccines.
 - (d) buy the vaccines from a doctor and send it to the house.
7. You have undertaken a project to create low cost homes for the poor. The project has taken off well. Some individuals have even moved in. They complain that the homes are not habitable due to presence of snakes. You would
 - (a) continue with the project ignoring their complaints.
 - (b) assure the residents of an enquiry.
 - (c) ask them to lodge a written complaint.
 - (d) ask them to re-consider their decision.
8. You have been approached by the parents of a girl who is being troubled by goons on her way to the college. As you are the M.L.A of the constituency, it is your duty to ensure the welfare of residents. You would
 - (a) tell them to file an FIR.
 - (b) take your own measures to catch the goons.
 - (c) counsel the girl and her parents.
 - (d) take the help of the Residents Welfare Association.
9. You are in charge of the police station. You are a very efficient officer. The resident feel safe and secure due to the efficient working of the police force. However, a dacoity taken place in your area. An old couple are attacked. People start criticizing you. You would
 - (a) complain to your superiors.
 - (b) submit your resignation.
 - (c) continue to work.
 - (d) work with your detractors.
10. You are an officer in the revenue department. One day as you are handling the cash, you realize that some money is missing from the safe. You would
 - (a) get it recounted by the cashier and tally it with balance sheet.
 - (b) appoint a private detective agency to look into the matter.
 - (c) inform the police about the missing money.
 - (d) inform your superiors and plead innocence.

11. You are the block development officer. The district has many matchbox factories. There is a report that the drinking water in a village is contaminated with arsenic making it unfit for human consumption. You would
- get the residents shifted to another area.
 - make arrangements for the supply of safe drinking water.
 - get water from a nearby village.
 - ask for extra funds to tide over the crisis.
12. As an official in the ministry of Foreign Affairs you come to know that the U.S is not likely to grant India's request for a \$ 500 million loan. A high level meeting has been called by the Ministry. What suggestions would you like to give?
- India should persuade U.S to grant the loan.
 - India should approach other countries for the loan.
 - India can approach the World Bank for redressal.
 - India should try to fall back upon its own resources in such a case.
13. The rainy season had not been good in Delhi last year. There was a major drop in the water table. The summers are going to be more difficult. As the mayor of the city, you are worried. You would
- seek help from neighbouring states to get additional water supply.
 - take steps to control the situation by opting for rainwater harvesting.
 - instruct the water supply department to impose a partial cut in supply to conserve water.
 - use the media to appeal to all the residents to reduce water consumption.
14. You are in charge of a steel factory where a large stock of live ammunition has been found as scrap. You would
- inform the police.
 - call the bomb squad.
 - close down the unit.
 - enquire into the matter and take corrective measures.
15. A woman stops you on your patrol and gives a wallet to you that contains ₹400 which she found on a cosmetic counter in a nearby store. There is nothing in the wallet which will help in its identification. What should you do?
- Ask her to keep the wallet.
 - Ask her to give the wallet back at the store's Lost and Found office.
 - Take the wallet, get her name, and give it to the police department's Lost and Found division.
 - None of the above.
16. You are the Chief Minister of U.P. Acquisition of land in Greater Noida has led to violence and death of many farmers. You are worried. You would
- institute an enquiry to prevent further incidents.
 - pull up the administrative staff for negligence.
 - speak to the people involved in purchase of land.
 - take measures to ensure that farmers are paid reasonable
- dues.
17. You are an officer in Central Bureau of Investigation. You receive a complaint about a junior from a civilian. He is asking for a bribe. You are undecided. You would
- suspend the assistant immediately.
 - institute an enquiry to find the truth of the matter.
 - give the assistant a warning.
 - inform the superiors giving them all the details.
18. You are the Municipal Commissioner of Delhi. It has been decided by the government to withdraw the mid-day meal scheme from primary schools. As a result, the number of dropouts has increased. To rectify the problem, you would
- ask the government to reconsider its decision.
 - consider closing down some schools.
 - inquire into the reason for high rate of dropouts.
 - ignore the problem.
19. You are a health official of your locality. Dengue is spreading very rapidly. Private hospitals are reporting a shortage of beds. One of your relatives suffering from dengue requests you to get him a bed in any hospital. You would
- help him out by talking to a friend in a nearby state.
 - request him to make his own arrangements as you are helpless in the matter.
 - use your influence to get him admitted to a private hospital.
 - take the help of a superior to get him admitted to a government hospital.
20. You have been working as a section officer in the Ministry for the past ten years. You deserve a promotion as a deputy secretary. You find that your juniors are being given preference over you. You would
- go in for voluntary retirement.
 - discuss the issue with your immediate boss.
 - report the matter to superiors.
 - apply for a transfer.
21. You are a woman IPS officer selected for promotion as a commissioner along with two other males. If one of your male colleagues is made the commissioner and you are not promoted, you would
- go in for voluntary retirement.
 - you would wait patiently as you have the ability.
 - you would protest formally.
 - you would take the help of media.
22. You are the manager of a village bank. The farmers are neck deep in debts. They are being exploited by the money lenders. An e-mail has been dispatched to the head office asking for permission to grant loans to such individuals but there has been no response. Two farmers have attempted suicide and the media is getting critical. You would
- take the money lenders to task.
 - sanction loans at your own risk.

- (c) send another request to the headquarters.
 (d) arrange for funds from any other source.
23. Workers have gone on strike to protest against the company's unfair treatment of workers. As a CEO, how would you deal with such a situation? You would
- (a) fire the employees who are on strike.
 (b) negotiate a deal.
 (c) declare a lock-out till the situation becomes normal.
 (d) try to reason with workers.
24. You are the D.M. of the Southern Railways. There is a major accident near Chennai. 10 people get killed. You would
- (a) send men and equipment to begin rescue operations.
 (b) divert trains on the route.
 (c) send an SOS to enlist help from all sources.
 (b) expect that the local villagers would give relief.
25. The old style single screen cinema halls are incurring heavy losses as people prefer to watch movies at home or on computers. As the owner of one such hall, you are worried. You would
- (a) close down the hall.
 (b) set up a multiplex to attract more visitors.
 (c) consider setting up a residential complex.
 (d) advertise about the richness of cinematic experience.
26. As the Education Minister, you are worried as engineering graduates are not getting employment. Number of unemployed engineers is likely to grow in future. To stop this trend, you would
- (a) close down the colleges which are not equipped properly.
 (b) launch employment schemes specifically for such graduates.
 (c) inform the public as to which colleges are good.
 (d) request colleges to upgrade their facilities.
27. You have been asked to give an explanation for not attending an important official meeting. Your immediate boss who has not informed you about the meeting is now putting pressure on you not to place an allegation against him/her. You would
- (a) send a written reply explaining the fact.
 (b) seek an appointment with the top boss to explain the situation.
 (c) admit your fault to save the situation.
 (d) put the responsibility on the coordinator of the meeting for not informing.
28. You are an officer in the department of Disaster Management. An earthquake in Sikkim has destroyed four villages. It has come to light that this was mainly due to poor level of development and inadequate infrastructure. To prevent such large scale destruction in the future, you would
- (a) replace all cemented buildings with wooden structures.
 (b) educate the residents about disaster management during an earthquake
 (c) call in the experts to improve existing infrastructure.
 (d) ask for extra funds to face future calamities.
29. You are an administrative officer at MCD. The footpaths in your area are occupied by vendors. This is dangerous for pedestrians. Traffic jams are caused as vendors and shoppers spill over on the streets. To solve this problem you would
- (a) round up the vendors and clear footpaths.
 (b) impose licence fees so a lesser number of vendors will appear.
 (c) get all the vendors shifted to an appropriate place.
 (d) provide vendors with alternative work.
30. You are a secretary in the Ministry of Foreign affairs. You are concerned about military threats India is facing from its neighbours. In your opinion, India should
- (a) go to war with her errant neighbours.
 (d) call for a dialogue on border issues.
 (c) get the support of the international community to counter such threats.
 (d) should spend more on Defence to safeguard itself.

Hints & Solutions

1. (b) Meeting the deputy secretary and acknowledging him about the situation will be the best course of action.
2. (c) Filing a case in this matter will be the best course of action. Reporting the matter to the police won't help as they too will advise to file a case in the court.
3. (b) It would be humane on your part to at least give him time to locate the document.
4. (a) This will prove your honesty and your willingness to bring transparency in the system.
5. (c) This would be the best option. This would satisfy both the parties.
6. (a) This the best option because the process has to be completed.
7. (b) Thus means that you are ready to look into the matter and take proactive measures.
8. (a) Filing an FIR is the right course of action in such cases. They approached you because they were looking for some other forceful action from you but you need to counsel them about the right procedure.
9. (c) Work must continue. You should also solve the problem.
10. (a) There is a possibility of counting mistake so, getting the money recounted by the cashier and tallying it with the Balance sheet will be best course of action.
11. (b) You have to take quick action as it is a question of drinking water which is a basic necessity.
12. (a) Diplomatic exercise should be undertaken to persuade the U.S. for granting the loan. Option (b) and (c) are steps that can be taken only after the failure of persuasion.
13. (c) This is very first step to be taken. Self help is the best help.
14. (a) The police is to be informed immediately. They will further send the bomb squad.
15. (b) This will enable the person who has lost the wallet to get in back.
16. (d) It is the best way to calm down tempers and ensure no such incident occurs in future.
17. (c) It would be correct to give the junior a chance.
18. (a) Since the reason for the dropouts is given so, no further enquiry is needed. You should ask the government to reconsider its decision.
19. (d) After all, he is your relative and it is your duty to help him. Charity begins at home.
20. (b) If you are on good terms with your boss then you can seek his advise in this matter.
21. (b) If you are truly deserving then there will be some other door which will open for you. In questions of this type, you have to apply a practical, rational and logical approach.
22. (c) Requesting the headquarters again seeking urgent response would be the best course of action.
23. (b) This the most positive and peaceful option satisfying every body. Production should not get disrupted.
24. (a) In this way, you will be taking responsibility into your own hands and not depend on others.
25. (b) This is the current trend. Cinema owners are converting their halls into multiplexes.
26. (b) The problem is of unemployment so option (b) is the best course of action.
27. (b) (a) A little less positive. A written explanation is too formal and technical. It will not touch the heart. It may raise doubts about the veracity of your statement.
(b) It is only ethical to keep your boss informed of any kind of development in the office.
(c) It does not make sense to cower under pressure. One should be able to stand up for oneself.
(d) It is negative. Making someone else the scape goat means asking for trouble. It will ultimately expose you as a liar who cannot be trusted.
28. (c) This would be the most practical and cost-effective response.
29. (c) To ensure the safety of pedestrians and smooth movement of traffic, all the vendors should be shifted to an appropriate place.
30. (d) Indians are peaceful people. We would like to adopt a peaceful process towards any problem.