

# Stop the Flip-Flop! How to Make Quick Decisions

For Women & Co. by [Amy Paturel](#), [AmyPaturel.com](#)

Making decisions in today's world is much more complicated than it was 20 years ago. Instead of three varieties of peanut butter, we're faced with 23. Instead of deciding between a desktop computer that's expensive and fast or cheap and slow, there's an array of desktops, notebooks, notebooks with monitors, and also tablets to choose from. The truth is, we spend a huge chunk of time making up our minds, says Caroline Miller, MAPP, professional coach and author of [Creating Your Best Life](#). From deciding to eat organic or conventional foods, to selecting the perfect countertops for a new home, to strategizing how to proceed on that business pitch, Miller notes the following strategies to help zero in on the best choice, particularly when it comes to making bigger decisions.

## Don't sweat the small stuff.

For smaller decisions, don't dawdle and go with your gut. Stop staring at the row of peanut butter or the 25 different movie selections. Instead, close your eyes, quiet your mind and tune into your body. "Decisions that have multiple variables – like buying a computer – will benefit from some shut-eye, but if it's a quick decision that involves few variables, your gut will often lead you to the right place," says Miller. Making a snap decision can be better than mulling things over when facing quick quizzes, too, according to a [study published in the journal Current Biology](#). Researchers interested in assessing the brain's higher-level processing asked study participants to identify an oddly rotated symbol on a screen of more than 650 identical symbols. Those who made quick, instinctive decisions did better at correctly identifying the symbol than those who gave a longer, more thought-out answer. There's truth to the saying "Don't over think it."

## Seek outside input.

For more complicated decisions, dispassionate third parties may be able to bring clarity to a situation clouded by emotions, says Miller. Just be forewarned that supportive friends might simply rubber-stamp one of your decisions in an effort to make you feel better.

## Se habla Espanol?

In a [study published in Psychological Science](#), researchers found that participants made smarter decisions when faced with the problem in a language in which they were proficient, but not fluent. If you tend to be swayed by your emotions when making difficult decisions, thinking in a foreign language—if you can—could help. "We tend to think more analytically in a non-native language," says Miller. "It allows us to assess risk more dispassionately."

## Sleep on it.

Results of a study published in the [Journal of Sleep Research](#) found that sleep enhances cognitive processes like decision-making. Subjects who had a normal night's sleep as part of the study had four times the winnings while playing a card game that mimicked casino gambling than those who spent the 12-hour

If you tend to be swayed by your emotions when making decisions, thinking in a foreign language could help.

break awake. Researchers suspect the enhanced effect on decision-making depends on rapid-eye-movement or REM sleep, which is the creative period of our sleep cycle. While gut instincts are good and generally safe for less important decisions, there's something to be said for taking a break from thinking about an important decision and letting your subconscious brain do the work.

---

Women & Co. is a service of Citibank, N.A., that provides financial content, commentary and related resources intended for informational purposes only. The views expressed in Women & Co. content constitute the judgment of the author(s) as of the publication date and are subject to change without notice. Women & Co. makes no guarantee about the accuracy of information provided by any third party. Women and Company, Women & Co., Citibank, Citi, and Citi with Arc Design are registered service marks of Citigroup Inc.

**Citigroup Inc. and its affiliates do not provide tax or legal advice. To the extent that this material or any attachment concerns tax matters, it is not intended to be used and cannot be used by a taxpayer for the purpose of avoiding penalties that may be imposed by law. Any such taxpayer should seek advice based on the taxpayer's particular circumstances from an independent tax advisor.**



**Copyright © 2012 Citigroup Inc.**

Information in this site is published in the United States and is intended only for persons in the United States. It is not intended for use by any person or entity in any other jurisdiction. The information contained herein is for informational purposes only. Women & Co. is a division of Citigroup. Women & Co. and Women and Company are registered service marks of Citigroup Inc.

**INVESTMENT AND INSURANCE PRODUCTS: NOT FDIC INSURED • NOT A BANK DEPOSIT • NOT INSURED BY ANY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY • NO BANK GUARANTEE • MAY LOSE VALUE**