

A FREE GUIDE FROM CUT RIVER FARM

THE CAREER CLARITY GUIDE

A simple formula for making any big choice in life —
and especially for choosing your first career.

Featuring the Decision Formula — an 8-step method you'll use for life.

It's okay to change your mind.
Start with a path you can actually open.

Real paths. Real momentum.

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THE DECISION FORMULA

One simple process for making any big choice in life —
and especially for choosing your first career.

Real paths. Real momentum.

Nobody actually teaches you how to decide

You were probably handed a personality test in high school that sorted you into a box, then given a list of jobs you'd never heard of. That isn't a decision — it's an output. Big choices have a process you can learn once and reuse for the rest of your life. Here it is, stripped down to eight steps. Use it for where to live, who to commit to, whether to start a business — or for the choice this guide is really about: your first career.

The 8-Step Formula (works for any decision)

1. Define the decision

State exactly what you're deciding, in plain words. A vague question gives a vague answer.

2. Clarify what matters

List your goals, values, and hard limits. Rank them so you know what's a deal-breaker versus just nice-to-have.

3. Gather real information

Get the facts you actually need — not endless research. Set a cutoff so you don't stall out.

4. Generate options

Come up with several real choices, not just two. Always include the "do nothing / wait" option.

5. Weigh the trade-offs

Score each option against what mattered in Step 2. The best choice gives you the most of what you want for the least of what you'll give up.

6. Check your thinking

What's the worst case — and can you live with it? Are you choosing for yourself, or for someone else's approval?

7. Decide and commit

Pick one. Set a date. Take the first concrete step. A decision you never act on isn't a decision.

8. Review later

Revisit it down the road. Judge the choice by the quality of your process, not just the outcome — and remember, changing your mind is data, not failure.

The everyday shortcut: What's my goal? My options? The trade-offs? Can I reverse it? If it's easily reversible, decide fast. If not, run the full formula.

The Same Formula — For Picking Your First Career

Here's a better way to pick a career: instead of scrolling through thousands of job listings and hoping something clicks — which is a crap shoot — start with the education and credentials actually available to you. Browse the certifications, licenses, and associate degrees out there, because each one points directly to the jobs it supports. A welding certificate, a phlebotomy license, an HVAC credential, an associate degree in radiography — every one comes with a clear answer to "what job does this get me?" You're not guessing anymore; you're working backward from a real, attainable path to the work it unlocks. Then you run that short list of real options through the formula below.

A note before you start: these questions are guidelines, not a script. Cross out what doesn't fit, and add your own. The best version of this is the one you personalize to your life.

Step 1 — Define the decision

- What do I want my next 2–3 years to look like (not "what should I be for life")?
- Am I choosing a first career, or changing direction from where I am now?
- What does "a good life" look like to me, in concrete terms?

Step 2 — Clarify what matters

- How much do I need to earn to live the way I want?
- Hands-on or desk work? Indoors or outdoors? Alone or around people?
- How fast do I need to start earning — now, or can I train for a while first?
- Where do I want to live, and does this path tie me to a place?
- How much schooling or debt am I actually willing to take on?
- What's a deal-breaker versus just nice-to-have? (Rank these.)

Step 3 — Gather real information (start with credentials)

- What certifications, licenses, and associate degrees are available to me?
- What jobs does each one directly support?
- What's the real day-to-day of those jobs — and what do they actually pay?
- How long, how much, and how hard is it to earn that credential?
- Is the field growing, steady, or shrinking where I live?
- Who's already doing this work that I could talk to for 15 minutes?

Step 4 — Generate options

- Which 3–5 real paths can I realistically open, each tied to a credential?
- Have I included options that don't require a four-year degree?
- Is there a path that lets me start earning while I keep training?
- What's my "explore further / stay put for now" option?

Step 5 — Weigh the trade-offs

- How does each path score against my ranked list from Step 2?
- Which gives me the most of what matters for the least of what I'll give up?
- Which doors does each credential open later — and which ones close?

Step 6 — Check your thinking

- What's the worst case for each path — and can I live with it?
- Am I choosing this for me, or for someone else's approval?
- Am I being honest about the cost and effort, or just chasing the salary number?

Step 7 — Decide and commit

- Which path am I starting?
- What's the very first concrete step — enroll, apply, sign up for the credential?
- What's my start date?

Step 8 — Review later

- Is this still working for me a year in?
- What have I learned that changes my ranking from Step 2?
- Is it time to layer on a new skill, stack another credential, or change direction? (Changing your mind isn't failure — it's new information.)

Why This Beats the Usual Advice

Taking a personality test, scrolling through thousands of online job listings, or picking a major because of pressure instead of certainty — none of it is a decision. It's guessing dressed up as a plan. Every one of those problems gets easier the moment you run it through this formula with honest questions.

The usual way	The Decision Formula way
A test sorts you into a personality box.	You define what <i>you</i> actually want and rank it.
You scroll thousands of jobs and hope.	You start with credentials and see exactly what doors open.
You pick a major under pressure.	You choose a real, attainable path on purpose.
You feel locked in and afraid to be "wrong."	You commit, knowing a first career can change.

The most important part

It's okay to change your mind. A first career is a starting move, not a life sentence. The people who feel stuck at 25 usually aren't the ones who chose "wrong" — they're the ones who never really chose at all. Every path is different, but continual self-improvement is the common factor. Layer skills, education of any kind, and daily effort, and you'll build a lucrative life.

Ready to find your real paths?

We built a free tool that does exactly what Step 3 and Step 4 describe — it starts with credentials and shows you the jobs each one opens up, across 330+ real paths. Stop scrolling job boards. Start with the door you can actually open.

CRF Life Plan Platform

Explore 330+ Paths After High School

thecutriverfarm.com/life-plan-platform

Your Worksheet

Work through your own first-career decision, one step at a time.

Print this out or fill it in digitally. There are no wrong answers — cross things out, add your own questions, and come back to it as you learn more. This is yours.

Step 1 — Define the decision

What do I want my next 2–3 years to look like?

Am I choosing a first career, or changing direction?

Step 2 — Clarify what matters (rank your top 3)

Earnings I need, work style, location, training time, debt tolerance — what are your deal-breakers?

Step 3 — Gather information (start with credentials)

Certifications / licenses / associate degrees available to me:

Jobs those credentials open up:

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Step 4 — Generate options (your 3–5 real paths)

Step 5 — Weigh the trade-offs

Which path gives me the most of what matters for the least of what I'll give up?

Step 6 — Check your thinking

Worst case I can live with? Am I choosing this for me, or for someone else's approval?

Step 7 — Decide and commit

The path I'm starting:

My very first concrete step (enroll, apply, sign up):

My start date:

Stuck on Steps 3 and 4? Our free Life Plan Platform starts with credentials and shows you exactly which jobs each one opens — 330+ real paths in one place. thecutriverfarm.com/life-plan-platform

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