

# THE BIAS CHECK

A Decision Reliability Worksheet

APEX PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTING | APPLIED PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

## Purpose

Bias does not always feel like bias. It can feel like experience, instinct, familiarity, certainty, or common sense. This worksheet slows down one meaningful decision long enough to examine what is influencing it. The objective is not perfect objectivity. The objective is a more reliable decision process.

**Use this worksheet for a real decision involving a person, opportunity, strategy, purchase, negotiation, hiring choice, performance judgment, partnership, or other consequential situation.**

## 1. Define the Decision

### What decision are you actually making?

State the decision specifically. Describe the decision, not the person.

### What outcome are you trying to achieve?

What would a good decision accomplish?

### What criteria should legitimately matter?

List the evidence, standards, qualifications, risks, behaviors, or outcomes relevant to the decision.

## 2. Capture Your Starting Point

### What is your current conclusion or first impression?

Record it before deeper analysis.

### How confident are you right now - and why?

A percentage can be useful. Confidence and accuracy are not the same thing.

### 3. Examine the Evidence

What evidence supports your current conclusion?

What evidence challenges your current conclusion?

Actively search for information that makes your preferred interpretation less certain.

What important information is missing?

What are you assuming because you do not yet have the answer?

### 4. Check for Common Decision Distortions

| Potential influence    | Decision check                                                                                               |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Confirmation           | Am I noticing evidence that supports what I already believe while discounting contradictory evidence?        |
| Anchoring              | Did a first number, first impression, prior salary, initial offer, or early opinion set the reference point? |
| Availability           | Am I overweighting a recent, vivid, emotional, or memorable example?                                         |
| Familiarity / affinity | Does this person or option feel better partly because it is familiar or similar to what I already know?      |
| Status quo             | Am I favoring the current option because changing course feels harder or riskier?                            |
| Hindsight              | Am I judging a past decision using information that became available only afterward?                         |
| Overconfidence         | Is my certainty stronger than the quality of the evidence warrants?                                          |

## 5. Consider the Opposite

Research on debiasing supports deliberately generating an alternative explanation rather than simply telling yourself to 'be objective.' The purpose is to make competing evidence cognitively available.

**If the opposite conclusion were true, what evidence would support it?**

**What is another plausible explanation for what you are seeing?**

**What evidence would genuinely make you change your mind?**

Be specific. If the answer is 'nothing,' examine whether the conclusion has become unfalsifiable.

## 6. Check Consistency

**Would you use the same criteria if the person, group, department, customer, or option were different?**

**Are you applying a standard that was established before you knew which option you preferred?**

## 7. Consider the Recipient

A decision has two sides. The recipient may interpret not only the outcome, but the consistency, transparency, and legitimacy of the process.

**How might the person receiving this decision reasonably interpret the process?**

**Can you explain the decision using relevant criteria without relying on assumptions, labels, or vague impressions?**

## 8. Decision Reliability Check

| Check             | Question                                                              | Rating 1-5 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Relevant evidence | Is the decision based primarily on information that actually matters? |            |
| Consistency       | Would the same standards be applied to a comparable person or option? |            |
| Counterevidence   | Was evidence against the preferred conclusion seriously considered?   |            |
| Alternatives      | Was at least one plausible alternative explanation examined?          |            |
| Process           | Can the reasoning be explained clearly and credibly?                  |            |
| Calibration       | Does confidence match the quality and completeness of the evidence?   |            |

### Final decision

After completing the worksheet, what decision will you make?

### Decision rationale

What evidence and criteria most strongly support the final decision?

### Follow-up / audit point

When will you revisit this decision, and what outcome would tell you the reasoning or process needs adjustment?

## Reflection

**The goal is not to prove that your first judgment was wrong. It is to make sure your final judgment can survive contact with competing evidence.**

Educational use only. This worksheet is an applied synthesis of research on cognitive bias, motivated reasoning, structured judgment, counterevidence, calibration, and decision-process design. It is not a diagnostic instrument and is not presented as a validated psychological assessment.