



Presents

Making a Financial Decision Using the Rowdy Cents S.A.F.E. Chart

The chart is made up of four components listed across the top. Your event will actually be stated as a question, for example, “Should I take a course in the summer? Should I live on campus, in an apartment, or at home? Should I work fulltime and go to school part-time?” Using the S.A.F.E. technique will help you examine the many facets of making a financial decision, whether simple or complex, for making a better-informed choice.

Example 1

State your college life event	Accentuate what’s good	Flip to the not-so-good	Explore more
Should I take a course in the summer?	I can earn another 3 credit hours. I will be another step closer to completing my degree. It costs a little bit less for a summer class. Perhaps I can take the class online at the community college	Perhaps it’s too much to do in a summer session. My job may interfere with my school. My kids are out of school and I have no daycare. It will cost money to take a class and travel to the campus every day.	What courses are being offered in the summer? Is there an online course here or at the community college? Is there a course in the evenings? Can Mom to keep kids while I’m at school? How much will it cost and can I get financial aid in the summer?
ACTION: YES & Register for it!			

Now, take your questions in the “Explore more” column and research each one until you have them all answered. Sometimes you can stop right there and the answers will let you know what to do.

What courses are being offered in the summer? I need a literature course for the core curriculum. It’s being offered at various times. If I take this course over the summer, I’ll be able to graduate the next May!

Is there an online course here or at the community college? Yes, according to the Alamo Colleges schedule but there’s one here at UTSA, too.

Is there a course in the evenings? No

Can Mom to keep kids while I’m at school? She said maybe.

How much will it cost and can I get financial aid in the summer? The UTSA fee schedule says about \$1050 plus the book. I can afford that!

Is it time for ACTION or more Exploration?? If you are still on the fence about the decision, do more research.

Example 2

This scenario is more involved than the one in Example 1. This student is trying to make a decision on 1 of 3 options.

State your college life event	Accentuate what's good	Flip to the not-so-good	Explore more
Should I live 1) at home, 2) rent an apartment nearby campus or 3) rent a suite in campus housing?	1) home – saves money; maintains family ties; can help with family obligations	will have to commute by car or bus – costs money; family obligations continue to take up my time and maybe away from studying; will be hard to have “freedom”	What is the nearest bus route? How much would it take to buy a car? Will family understand my need for studying and privacy?
	2) rent an apartment – can be on my own; can share expenses with one other person; if nearby campus, I could walk or ride the bus to campus freedom to do what I want when I want	spend money to get set up in an apartment; pay rent; find a friend to share the apartment; be tied to a lease for a year; may need a car or ride a bus	What apartments are nearby campus? Where is the money coming from? How much will deposits and rent be? What other expenses would I have with an apt? Can I get a lease for less than a year? How much for a car and gas? How much is the bus ride?
	3) on-campus housing – can walk to classes; close to activities; close to library and computer labs	will cost money to rent; may have to share a suite with someone I don't know; might be lonely during breaks; might be noisy and disruptive to my studying	What does it cost? Are there other expenses involved? Can I choose my roommate? How long is the lease for? Can I cook there or must I buy a meal plan?

Example 2 requires the student to do a lot of exploration for three options. Automatically you know that options 2 and 3 will cost more than living at home, option 1. If there is no money for rent then the only option to choose is living at home. If rent money is obtainable, deciding between an apartment and the on-campus housing becomes a decision of convenience rather than cost, although cost can be an important factor, too.

Let's take Example 2 one step further in the decision-making process:

Our student has decided to pare down the options to two. This is what he considers next.

Options	COSTS	ACCENTUATE	FLIP
Live at home	<p>No charge to live at home says Mom and Dad</p> <p>Must have transportation to school and back:</p> <p>Buy a used car: \$4000 - \$5000 or \$2000 down on a new car</p> <p>Gasoline and maintenance: \$50/mo</p> <p>Insurance: \$50/mo</p> <p>Parking Permit on campus: \$20/mo</p> <p>Estimated monthly expenses: \$120 gas/maint/ins</p> <p>Estimated car payment if new: \$150</p> <p>Total monthly expenses could be \$270 (plus or minus \$)</p> <p>Total monthly expenses for 9 months = \$2,430</p> <p>For an academic year from \$\$4,400 to \$6,500 estimated</p>	<p>Would give me freedom to come and go as I please</p> <p>Can help friends with transportation; maybe have a carpool</p>	<p>Will put miles on the car- wear and tear for maintenance</p> <p>Might have conflict with friends</p> <p>Might have car problems</p> <p>Have to come up with cash to buy or a down payment on a new car.</p> <p>If a new car will have car payments, so added monthly expense</p> <p>Will have to buy a campus parking permit or use the garage on occasions</p> <p>What if I don't qualify to buy a new car, will a parent cosign or will a used car be okay?</p>
Live in residential facility on campus	<p>Monthly payments of \$719 x 9 months (not including summers) total \$6,471.</p> <p>Purchase a minimal meal plan at \$2100 for 2 semesters</p> <p>For an academic year \$8,500 estimated</p>	<p>Easy access to campus activities and classes</p> <p>Don't have to worry about cooking or cleaning up</p> <p>No transportation needed other than on weekends, holidays and breaks</p>	<p>Not sure about roommate in sharing a 2 bedroom suite</p> <p>May not get along with roommate</p> <p>May not like the food choices</p> <p>Might have to rely on friends to get other places</p>

Our student would go through the same exploration steps as in Example 2 with just these options. The estimated costs are not too far apart, \$6,500 living at home vs. \$8,500 living on-campus. The student may decide to choose the on-campus option not because of costs but because it is more convenient and more accessible to friends, classes, and activities.