

# You Don't Have to Have It All Figured Out Yet: **A Guide to Prepare You Post-Secondary School**



**Congratulations!** You are officially a secondary school graduate. 🎓

Getting through secondary school and SPM is no small feat. Between classes, assignments, exams, co-curricular activities and everything else happening around you, school can be exhausting. So, take a moment to recognise how far you've come.

Moving forward, your day-to-day life may look quite different. Whether you choose to continue your studies or enter the workforce, you will likely have more freedom and autonomy over how you spend your time. There may fewer people reminding you what needs to be done, and more decisions for you to make on your own.

While having more freedom can be exciting, it can also feel a little scary. You may find yourself wondering whether you're making the right choices or figuring things out the way *"you're supposed to."*

But that's also part of growing up. There's no single guidebook for navigating this next stage of life—but there are a few skills that can make the journey a little easier.

## 1. Start With Knowing Yourself

Over the years, through co-curricular activities, club meetings, tuition classes and everyday experiences, you've probably tried different things, met different people and discovered what you like and dislike, what you're good at, what you struggle with, and what matters to you.

These experiences can give you clues about **the kind of person you are**. As you think about what comes next, take some time to reflect on those clues. What are you naturally drawn to? What kind of work or environment brings out your strengths? What are your priorities, values and goals?

Getting to know yourself can help you make decisions that are more aligned with who you are, rather than simply choosing a path because others are choosing it. If you're looking to explore this a little further, you can also check out FINCO's guide on [understanding yourself better and figuring out your post-SPM steps](#).

## 2. Learn To Make A Decision

Decision-making sounds simple enough: look at your options, pick one and move on. But when you're used to having parents, teachers or other adults guide you through your choices, making decisions on your own can feel much harder.

There's nothing wrong with asking for advice. Others can offer perspectives and experiences you may not have considered, but learning to make your own decisions is just as important. Take their advice into account, but remember that **the final decision is yours to make and yours to live with**.

It's also worth remembering that advice is often shaped by someone else's experiences; Your parents, teachers or other adults may have valuable lessons to share, but their experiences may not always reflect the opportunities, challenges or circumstances you are facing today. For decisions that can have a significant impact on your life, take the time to do your own research, consider different perspectives and understand your options before reaching a conclusion.

And if making decisions feels overwhelming, you don't have to rely on instinct alone. Simple decision-making tools can help you organise your thoughts. Try making a [pros and cons analysis](#), using a [priority wheel](#) to identify what matters most to you, or

applying the [10-10-10 method](#) to think about how a decision might affect you in the short, medium and long term.

Most importantly, remember that **making a decision doesn't always mean making the perfect decision**. Sometimes, you simply have to make the best choice you can with the information you have, learn from the outcome and adjust along the way.

### 3. Build Basic Life & Social Skills

As you become more independent, you'll need to learn how to manage yourself as well as navigate the people around you. As you become more independent, you'll need to learn how to manage yourself and navigate everyday responsibilities. This means being comfortable with day to day tasks such as keeping track of commitments, organising your time, communicating clearly and asking for help when you need it.

The good news is that these skills can be practised in everyday situations. **Start small.** Take the initiative to handle something on your own, practise organising your day, or make an effort to solve a small problem before asking someone else to step in.

#### You can start taking charge of the little things like...

- ✓ Keeping track of your own deadlines and commitments
- ✓ Following through on what you say you'll do
- ✓ Owning it when you make a mistake
- ✓ Asking for help when you need it



Social skills are just as important. You'll meet people with different personalities, opinions and ways of communicating, and you won't always agree with them. Learn to listen before responding, handle disagreements respectfully, speak up when you need to and know when to say no.

You won't get every interaction right but what matters is being willing to listen, communicate clearly, respect others and speak up for yourself. This will help you navigate new environments, relationships and responsibilities beyond school.

### 4. Get Comfortable With Not Knowing

If there's one thing you should take away from this article, it's that **you don't need to have everything figured out yet**. Leaving school can come with a lot of questions. You

may not know exactly what you want, whether your plans will work out, or even what you'll be doing a few years from now. And that's okay!

There will be times when you don't know the answer, feel unsure about a decision or find yourself in a situation you haven't experienced before. Instead of seeing uncertainty as something to avoid, learn to see it as part of growing up. You can ask questions, seek advice, try something new and change your mind when you learn something different.

**It's also okay for your plans to change.** What feels right for you today may not be what you want a year from now, and changing direction doesn't mean you've failed. As you gain new experiences and learn more about yourself, you may discover new interests, priorities or possibilities that you hadn't considered before.

When you're unsure about what comes next, give yourself time to reflect instead of rushing to find an answer. Take a step back, think about what matters to you, and give yourself permission to make a different choice if it feels right for you. **Listen to the people around you, but remember that their expectations and experiences don't have to become your own.**

So, don't worry if you don't have a five-year plan, a perfect answer or a clear idea of what comes next. What matters is being willing to learn, make decisions, try new things and adjust when life takes you somewhere unexpected. You're allowed to figure things out as you go along.

All the best for your next chapter. We're excited to see where it takes you!

## Resources

1. <https://www.globalyouthcounseling.com/blog/global-youth-8/decision-making-for-teens-and-young-adults-building-confidence-and-clarity-62>