

## How to ... deal with an indecisive boss

**Level:** Intermediate–upper intermediate

---

**Time:** 90 minutes

---

**Summary:** This lesson is about how to deal with a boss that is unable or unwilling to make decisions. In this lesson, students:

1. exchange ideas on what makes a good and bad boss;
2. study an article with tips on dealing with an indecisive boss;
3. discuss how relevant the advice is to their work context;
4. practise giving and accepting advice.

---

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student

---

**Group size:** Any

### Understanding the article

Students go through the article to find eight pieces of advice and write them into the box or say them aloud.

**Key:**

a.	
1.	<i>Instead of waiting for a decision, try presenting a well-documented one to your boss.</i>
2.	<i>Find out what the reasons or repercussions of an action might be.</i>
3.	<i>Earn your boss's trust and become an enabler of their decisions.</i>
4.	<i>Give clear, concise, pertinent information.</i>
5.	<i>Provide whatever data is needed to make good, solid, final decisions.</i>
6.	<i>Lower the stress for both of you.</i>
7.	<i>Always adopt a calm and patient manner.</i>
8.	<i>Keep a paper trail of all decisions.</i>

**Note:** This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 3/2020.

### Warmer

As an introduction to the topic, students first briefly think about the best and worst boss they have ever had and complete the sentences with their own ideas. They do this on their own and then compare answers with a partner.

### Key words

Students match the key words with the definitions and then find them in the article before reading carefully through the article and noticing how they are used in context.

**Key:**

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. <i>decisiveness</i>  | 7. <i>enabler</i>      |
| 2. <i>wishy-washy</i>   | 8. <i>vacillate</i>    |
| 3. <i>micromanager</i>  | 9. <i>bolstered</i>    |
| 4. <i>step up</i>       | 10. <i>concise</i>     |
| 5. <i>go after</i>      | 11. <i>pertinent</i>   |
| 6. <i>repercussions</i> | 12. <i>paper trail</i> |

In part b, students discuss which advice they would find the easiest or hardest to follow in their work situation and when communicating with their boss.

**Note:** if this does not apply to the student's individual work situation, expand the question so that it includes their head of department or any other superior in the company that they have to deal with.

### Discussion

In small groups, students discuss their answers to the questions. Again, where appropriate, students should expand the questions to include any superiors they have had dealings with at work. The questions encourage the practice of some of the language from the article.

### Good advice

Students first read the language box. Then they work in A–B pairs and role-play the situations provided. They should try to use the sentence beginnings followed by advice from the article (or other advice of their own) as well as the ways of responding that they find most appropriate when discussing the situations. If they have a situation at work that is negatively affected by an indecisive boss, they should describe this and ask their partner for advice.