

Decision Point #1

What is your assessment of the situation? Rank the answers below 1-4 with 1 being the option that most closely resembles your own thinking and 4 being the option least like your own thinking.

Rank	Option
1	a. I have to get to the movie. Not only is this an opportunity to get in with the popular crowd, it will be a mark against me if I don't go. This is an important test for me.
2	b. As much as I hate to admit it, Mom is being not being unreasonable. One of the conditions of getting the car is driving my siblings places.
4	c. There just is no way to get Perry, Anna and Josh to the party and still get to the movie in time. The mature thing to do is to skip the movie. Maybe I can arrange to meet with Ashleigh and Jessica after the movie.
3	d. Mom just doesn't get it. She's being unreasonable. I've got to work on Dad to get him to take Perry and Anna to the party.

Rationale. Provide a short rationale for your decision.

The experts were agreed that getting to the movie was the most important thing at this point. As one said: "From a social capital perspective, my main priority is to make it to the movie, ideally on time. However, I feel like I can risk being late and I'll just complain about my unreasonable parents. It is worse to miss the movie."

Although they might blame their parents publicly, most accepted that mom was not being totally unreasonable—or at least had the leverage in this situation: "I'm assuming it is not my own vehicle, which makes this decision out of my control. If I want to continue using the car, I should do what my mom asks and take the kids to the party."

The experts all agreed it was way too early to give up on the movie. As one said: "Obviously that is ridiculous, I mean, I know I'm pushing it to do it all, but I have to try." Most felt that giving up on the movie was the worst option, but one actually felt that d. was worse: "D is actually the worst option because I'll still probably end up doing it [i.e., driving the kids] and will have wasted valuable time trying to convince my dad and then having my mother step in and yell at me for jurisdiction shopping, and possibly nix the whole trip. Not even worth considering."

Finally, the experts were thinking about the gasoline situation: "I'm concerned about the gasoline situation, but I figure I'll deal with that after the movie. There has to be enough to make it to the theater, so I'll get gas right after."

Decision Point #2

What route are you going to take? Rank the answers below 1-4 with 1 being the best course of action and 4 being the worst.

Rank	Option
1a	a. I have no choice but to take the expressway now. It's the only chance I have of getting to the movie on time.
1b	b. The expressway is bad enough on a good day, but with a baseball game about to start, it will be a mess. I'm better off staying on surface roads.
4	c. I'm screwed. I can't get to the movie in time, no matter what route I take. Time to pull the plug on this plan.
3	d. Is there a route with a gas station? That could address the gas problem, as well as Anna's bathroom problem.

Rationale. Provide a short rationale for your decision.

The expert 17-year-olds were divided on whether to take the expressway, but the slight majority was for staying on the surface roads. It came down to willingness to take risks. One said: "I'm definitely running late, and this is the only chance I have, so I have to take it [i.e., the expressway]. Plus, good to face your fears, right?" However, another said: "There are a number of factors playing against me—low fuel, sick children, and now knocking underneath the car. I absolutely need to stay off the highway—the chance of backup/traffic jam is high and that's the last place I want to be with low fuel (and a car full of children)."

As noted, those who decided to stay on surface roads saw that as a way to solve the gasoline problem: "Given that I'm staying on the surface roads, I think the optimal choice is to find a route that includes a nearby gas station."

One multitasking expert teen saw a way to solve multiple problems at once: "Because there might be traffic, I definitely need gas—even if it adds 10 minutes. I think I'd stop for gas, tell Anna and Josh to run to the bathroom, call Josh's mom while I'm fueling and let her know he is feeling sick so she can come pick him up early. If he hasn't already gotten sick in the car, I'd drop the children at the party, tell Josh to tell the adults he isn't feeling well when he gets there and to wait for his mom, then try to make it to the movie late."

None of the experts was willing to give up yet. One called that option "fatalistic."

Decision Point #3

What are you going to do? Rank the answers below 1-5 with 1 being the best course of action and 5 being the worst.

Rank	Option
5	a. Beating. That will get them to shut up.
3	b. Take them home. One is sick, and one says he doesn't want to go anyway. The third is complaining she has to go to the bathroom.
4	c. Abandonment. Just drop them off at a safe location and continue to the movie. Call Dad to tell him where they are.

2	d. Blackmail. You know that Anna is hiding a package of Oreos in her room, which is strictly against the rules. Mom would freak. Plus, you happen to know that it was Perry who broke Mom’s commemorative Charles and Diana Wedding plate.
1	e. Bribery. Promise them ice cream if they behave themselves.

Rationale. Provide a short rationale for your decision.

The experts were agreed: “Bribery is clearly the best option and offers the best hope of them actually attending the birthday party and not complaining too much to me or to the parents about me.” Keep the bribe small though because the price is only going to go up the next time you have to try it (which you will).

The experts clearly considered blackmail next best. Said one: “As a backup, blackmail might do the trick, although I don’t have a plan for silencing Josh”—unless you have some good dirt on him too. Also, one expert, taking the long view, thought this was not the time to play the blackmail card: “I’d rather use these tidbits for something more important. Knowledge is power, right?” Also, blackmail is not without risk. In fact, you open yourself up to the possibility of the twins blackmailing *you* later over your attempt to use blackmail on them. As another expert said: “I suppose I could blackmail them, but that could turn around to bite me. Plus, it is not going to help with Josh’s upset stomach and the knocking car.”

The experts felt that if you were not willing to try bribery or blackmail, you might as well take the kids home. One said: “I hate this option, but it is better than the others. Beating may solve my problems in the short term, but once my parents find out about it, I will be in HUGE trouble. Even I think abandoning them is a hugely bad idea and also will get me into even bigger trouble later.” Along the same lines, another said: “As much as I’d like to beat them, that’s probably not ideal.”

Decision Point #4

What are you going to do? Rank the answers below 1-4 with 1 being the best course of action and 4 being the worst.

Rank	Option
3	a. Find another exit from the parking lot. I’m not locked into the traffic jam yet. I can get around this.
1	b. Take a picture of the scene with my phone and text it to Ashleigh. They will all get a laugh about that, which will get me some points. Plus, they will know it is not my fault for being late.
4	c. Time to accept that the Fates are against me on this. I’m not making it to the movie. I might as well go back to the Pizza Castle and bring in the present that Perry forgot.

2	d. You know, in light of all this, the movie just is not that important. Somebody needs to help this poor old lady. It might as well be me. If Ashleigh and the other Queen Bees don't understand, that's their problem.
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Rationale. Provide a short rationale for your decision.

Our expert 17-year-olds unanimously agreed that taking the picture—or better yet, a short video—was the best option, for a variety of reasons. One said: “Right now, I need a socially acceptable reason for being late or missing the movie. BINGO! This will absolve me of lateness and give me something to bond with them about later.” Another said: “First, I would take the picture and send it to my friends (it’s too good of an opportunity to pass up). It’s not every day you get to see that kind of fiasco.” A video is sure to go viral and will make you an instant social media sensation. You will get MAJOR points with the popular kids for this.

One of our experts took a long-term, strategic view: “I’d take the photo, get out to help the old woman, which would solve all the traffic issues, then send the picture to Ashleigh explaining why I won’t be able to make it. Then, after I got home, I’d explain exactly what happened to my mother, in hopes that she’d feel guilty that my plans got ruined and maybe think twice about letting Dad take the kids next time.” Brilliant.

Beyond taking the photo, however, the experts were not in complete agreement. One was not willing to give up on the movie: “I still think I can maneuver my way out of this situation. I’ll be late, but I’ll get there”—and probably arrive with a lot more social capital after having sent the picture. Others opted for helping the old lady: “Next, I would help out with the lady because it is the right thing to do, and I would feel guilty after taking the picture.” So, the younger generation is not completely without compassion. Not everyone agreed with helping out, however. One took a much more utilitarian view: “This, while generous in spirit, feels untenable. How am I going to park my car someplace reasonable, get over to her, and help pick up, in a reasonable time window? Not realistic.”

By this point, while some of our experts were still going to try to get to the movie late, others were reluctantly willing to accept that the movie was not going to happen. Once you accept that, it is easy to resolve all the other dilemmas. Said one fatalistic expert: “It’s clear that the Fates are against me—I’m not going to make the movie. I would go back and bring the gift to Perry. Then I would immediately get gas, go home, tell my parents about the knocking noise in the car, and then cry in my bed.”