

I don't understand!

In Real Life

It can be essential that you follow instructions and directions exactly.

Sometimes even the smallest change can have serious consequences.

Every day, you're bombarded with directions and instructions. You read them in manuals, on labels, and in cookbooks. You listen to them from parents, teachers, supervisors, doctors, and traffic officers. Directions and instructions are often complicated. Sometimes they're badly written or contain words and ideas that are new to you. What should you do when you don't understand?

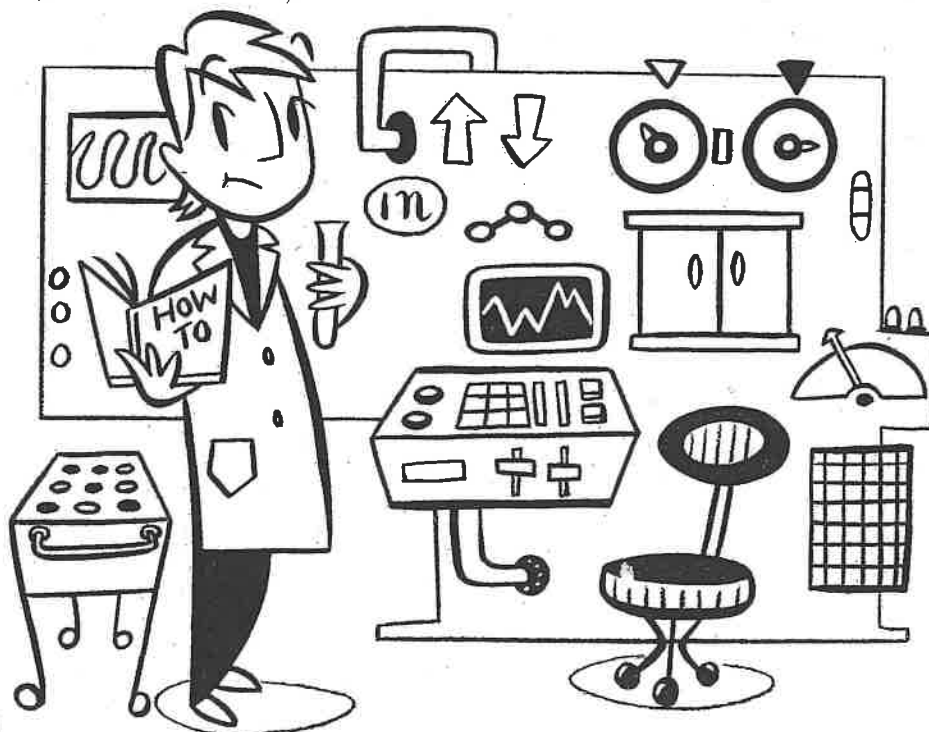
Morton's decision

Morton works as a lab technician at Midway Hospital. In his job he runs tests on blood samples from patients. The tests involve using computerized machines. In order to get accurate results, Morton must follow the directions for using the machines exactly. He must also be careful to handle the samples according to instructions. Otherwise, they may become contaminated—or he may be exposed to serious infections, including the HIV virus.

Recently, the lab put in a new machine to run one of the tests Morton handles. Morton read the instructions for the machine, but didn't understand them. When he asked his supervisor to help him, she said, "It's really not all that hard, Morton, but I'll go over it with you once." She seemed impatient as she rushed through the steps. Now Morton is running the test on his first batch of samples, and he still isn't sure what to do next.

What can you do to be sure you'll understand and remember oral instructions?

- Listen carefully.
- Don't give in to distractions.
- Ask questions about anything you don't understand.
- Take notes.
- Repeat the instructions in your own words to the person giving them so he or she can clarify anything you're unclear about.



Morton's decision chart

What do you think Morton should do? Should he try to use the machine on his own? Ask his supervisor for more help? Ask a coworker for help? Think of advantages and disadvantages for each choice as you complete the decision chart.

	The situation:		
What is the situation?			
	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C
What are the choices?			
	advantages	advantages	advantages
What are the advantages of each choice?			
	disadvantages	disadvantages	disadvantages
What are the disadvantages of each choice?			
	The most important considerations:		
What considerations are most important?			
	The best thing to do:		
Which is the best choice? What shall I do?			