

Money Mastermind: The Art of Saving and Frugal Living

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will discover that being "frugal" isn't about being cheap—it's about being a "Money Mastermind." Students will learn how to distinguish between needs and wants, apply practical strategies to save money, and understand the long-term power of patience.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to:

- **Define** frugality and saving in their own words.
- **Categorize** expenses into "Needs" and "Wants."
- **Apply** the "24-Hour Rule" to a hypothetical purchase.
- **Create** a personalized savings plan for a specific goal.
- **Identify** at least three "Frugal Hacks" to lower everyday costs.

Materials Needed

- Paper and colored markers/pens
- 3 small jars or containers (labeled: "Spend," "Save," "Give")
- A handful of small items (coins, beans, or LEGO bricks) to represent currency
- Access to a grocery flyer or an online shopping site (for price comparison)
- The "Goal Thermometer" worksheet (can be hand-drawn)

1. Introduction: The Hook (10 Minutes)

The "Instant vs. Later" Challenge:

Place one small treat (like a marshmallow or a sticker) in front of the student. Tell them: "You can have this right now. BUT, if you can wait until the end of our lesson without touching it, I will give you three of them instead."

Discussion Questions:

- Is it hard to wait for the bigger prize? Why?
- If you spend \$10 on a toy today, what can't you do with that \$10 tomorrow?

The Big Idea: Saving isn't about saying "no" to fun; it's about saying "yes" to something bigger and better later on!

2. Body: Content & Practice (40 Minutes)

Part A: Needs vs. Wants (I Do / We Do)

I Do: Explain that a *Need* is something required for survival or basic health (water, shelter, simple clothes). A *Want* is something that makes life more fun but isn't necessary (video games, designer sneakers, candy).

We Do: The "Sorting Game." Use the "currency" (beans/coins). I will list items, and you decide if it's a Need or a Want. If it's a Want, you have to "pay" 2 coins. If it's a Need, you pay 1 coin. Let's see how much "money" you have left at the end.

- Items to sort: A winter coat, a Netflix subscription, bread, a new iPhone, electricity, a trip to the movies.

Part B: The Frugality Toolbox (I Do)

Teach three core strategies for being frugal:

1. **The 24-Hour Rule:** If you want to buy something that isn't a "Need," you must wait 24 hours. If you still want it tomorrow, then you can consider it. (Usually, the "must-have" feeling disappears!)
2. **Comparison Shopping:** Never buy the first thing you see. Look at two different stores or brands to see who has the lower price for the same quality.
3. **The "Library Mindset":** Before buying a book, movie, or tool, ask: "Can I borrow this or find it for free?"

Part C: The Comparison Hunt (You Do)

The Activity: Give the student a mission. "We need to buy a box of cereal (or a specific toy)." Using a grocery flyer or a website, find three different prices for that item.

- Store A price: _____
- Store B price: _____
- Generic/Store Brand price: _____

Ask: If we buy the cheapest one, how much money do we save? What could we do with that extra money?

3. Activity: The Savings Roadmap (20 Minutes)

Step-by-Step Guidance:

1. **Pick a Goal:** Have the student identify one thing they really want (e.g., a \$50 LEGO set).
2. **Draw the Thermometer:** On a piece of paper, draw a tall thermometer. Mark the bottom as \$0 and the top as the total cost.
3. **The Strategy:** Brainstorm 3 "Frugal Acts" they can do to reach this goal faster (e.g., "I will pack a lunch instead of buying it," or "I will check the thrift store for the item first").
4. **The Three Jars:** Set up the "Spend, Save, Give" jars. Explain that for every \$1 they get, they should decide how to split it. (Standard suggestion: 10% Give, 40% Save, 50% Spend).

4. Conclusion: Closure & Recap (10 Minutes)

Recap: Ask the student to explain the difference between a "Cheapskate" (someone who won't spend money even on things they need) and a "Money Mastermind" (someone who is frugal so they can afford what really matters).

Final Check:

- What is the 24-Hour Rule?
 - Why is comparison shopping like a treasure hunt?
 - Reward the student with the "delayed gratification" treat from the beginning!
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Assessment (How do we know they got it?)

- **Formative:** Observation during the "Needs vs. Wants" sorting game.
 - **Summative:** The completed "Savings Roadmap" and the ability to identify the price difference during the Comparison Hunt.
 - **Success Criteria:** The student can name one "Need" they have and one "Want" they are willing to wait for.
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Differentiation & Adaptability

- **For Advanced Learners:** Introduce the concept of *Unit Pricing* (e.g., how much does one ounce of cereal cost vs. the whole box). Discuss how saving \$5 a week at age 11 turns into thousands by age 20 due to compound interest.
- **For Struggling Learners:** Focus strictly on the "Needs vs. Wants" distinction using physical items around the house rather than abstract concepts.
- **For Classroom Context:** Turn the Comparison Hunt into a group competition to see which team can "save" the most money on a hypothetical grocery list.