

Can you make smart choices with your hard-earned money?

Teen Summer Paycheck Challenge



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TEACHER PREP

Time requirement:

Two or three 40-to-60-minute class periods

Grade Level: 9-12

Materials:

- Summer Job Cards (1 per group)
- Paycheck Planning Worksheet (1 per student)
- Event Sheets (1 per group)
- Saving Goals Page (optional; 1 per group)
- Final Reflection Page (1 per student)
- Dice (2 per group)
- Calculators

Teacher's Guide:

In this lesson, students participate in the Teen Summer Paycheck Challenge, a simulation that helps young people understand what happens when they earn money from a summer job and make choices about spending or saving that money.

Working in small teams, students will:

- Choose a summer job with realistic wages and work hours.
- Estimate how much money they could earn over several weeks.
- Create a personal spending and saving plan based on their goals.
- Face surprise financial events that challenge their plans.
- Share and reflect on what they learned about balancing spending, saving, and planning.

By the end of the challenge, students will complete a Final Reflection analyzing how their financial decisions affected their outcomes and what strategies helped them manage their money effectively.



BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

PREP & SETUP

Print: Summer Job Cards, Paycheck Planning Worksheets, Event Sheets, Final Reflection Pages, and (optional) Saving Goals Pages.

Arrange students in groups of 2–4.

Ensure each group has calculators, scratch paper, and 2 dice.

DURING THE ACTIVITY

DAY 1: STARTING THE TEEN SUMMER PAYCHECK CHALLENGE

1 Opening Discussion

Prompt: “If you earned \$2,500 from a summer job, what would you spend it on, what would you save for, and what unexpected expense might pop up?”

- Quick jot + a few shares; brief whole-class discussion.
- Explain: In the Teen Summer Paycheck Challenge, you will simulate earning money from a job and making real decisions about how to use it.

2 Introduce the Challenge

Explain to the class that student groups will:

- Choose a job, estimate earnings, set spend/save goals, handle surprise events, and track results.

- Students will track their financial decisions throughout the challenge.

3 Choose a Job and Create a Paycheck Plan

- Teams pick a Summer Job Card.
- Every student completes a Paycheck Planning Worksheet (Create Your Paycheck Plan).
- Invite a few teams to share key goals (e.g., emergency fund, big-ticket savings).

4 Begin the Teen Paycheck Challenge

Each Week (repeat x4):

1. **Earnings:** Record weekly hours, taxes, and take-home pay on the Budget Tracker.
2. **Event:** Roll dice > record that week’s Event Sheet outcome.
3. **Decisions:** Allocate spending/saving toward goals; update end-of-week balance.

Mid-Point Pause after Week 2:

Ask:

- “Did you change your plan? Why?”
- “Which expenses are hardest to handle?”
- “Do you wish you’d saved more earlier?”

Finish (after Week 4):

- Distribute Final Reflection Page; students complete in class or for homework.

AFTER THE ACTIVITY

REFLECT AND DEBRIEF

1 Quick team share-outs: job chosen, original plan, surprise events, goal status.

Discuss:

- Which decision was hardest?
- How did unexpected expenses change choices?
- Why is planning ahead important?
- What strategies help teens stay on track?

2 Optional Assessment

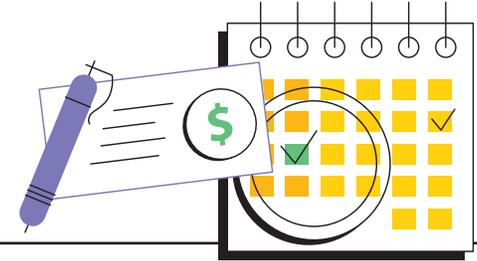
Collect Paycheck Planning Worksheets and Final Reflections.

Note: If desired, you may adapt the activity so each student selects their own job while still helping others in their group through each round of the game.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Paycheck Planning Worksheet



1 Create Your Paycheck Plan (Use your Summer Job Card to fill in the blanks below.)

Job:	Hourly pay:	Hours per week:
Weekly earnings before taxes:	Estimated taxes withheld each week: Social Security: _____ Medicare: _____ Federal Income Tax: _____	Total taxes per week:
Saving Goal 1: Save _____ per week	Saving Goal 2: Save _____ per week	Saving Goal 3: Save _____ per week

2 Weekly Budget Tracker (Complete this table for each week of the Teen Summer Paycheck Challenge)

Week	Weekly Earnings (Before Taxes)	Taxes Withheld	Take-Home Pay	Event Card	Money Spent or Earned from Event	Amount Saved	End-of-Week Balance
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							

Name: _____

Date: _____

Final Reflection

Teen Summer Paycheck Challenge

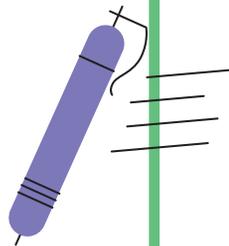
Now that you've completed the Teen Summer Paycheck Challenge, take a few minutes to reflect on your experience. Think about the decisions you made, the challenges you faced, and what you learned about managing money.

- 1** Look back at how much you were hoping to save for each of your saving goals. Did you meet those goals? Explain what helped you stay on track and what made it difficult.
- 2** What was the most difficult financial decision you had to make during the challenge?
- 3** Which event had the biggest impact on your budget? How did you adjust your plan when this happened?
- 4** Did you ever have to give up something you wanted to make sure you had money for something you needed? What decision did you make and why?
- 5** What is one important lesson about money or budgeting that you learned from this challenge?



Final thought:

Describe one money habit you want to practice in real life when you start earning your own paycheck.





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Event Sheet



Directions:

Roll your dice and add the numbers together.

Move to that space on the game board.

Record the amount of your event on your Budget Tracker.

2.
Flat Tire
(Mandatory)

Pay \$180

3.
Cracked Phone Screen
(Mandatory)

Pay \$150

4.
Concert Tickets
(Optional)

Pay \$120

5.
Birthday Money



6.
Extra Work Shift



7.
**Gas/
Transportation Costs**
(Mandatory)

Pay \$60

8.
Car Inspection
(Mandatory)

Pay \$150

9.
Found \$40



10.
Food Delivery
(Optional)

Pay \$50

11.
Work Performance Bonus



12.
Work Bonus





Summer Job Cards

Ice-Cream Shop Worker

Pay: \$13/hour
Hours: 32/week
Weekly earnings: \$416

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$26
- Medicare: \$6
- Federal tax estimate: \$5

Grocery Store Cashier

Pay: \$14/hour
Hours: 35/week
Weekly earnings: \$490

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$30
- Medicare: \$7
- Federal tax estimate: \$7

Fast-Food Crew Member

Pay: \$14.50/hour
Hours: 36/week
Weekly earnings: \$522

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$32
- Medicare: \$8
- Federal tax estimate: \$8

Camp Counselor Assistant

Pay: \$15/hour
Hours: 35/week
Weekly earnings: \$525

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$33
- Medicare: \$8
- Federal tax estimate: \$8

Retail Store Associate

Pay: \$14/hour
Hours: 34/week
Weekly earnings: \$476

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$30
- Medicare: \$7
- Federal tax estimate: \$7

Movie Theater Worker

Pay: \$13/hour
Hours: 32/week
Weekly earnings: \$416

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$26
- Medicare: \$6
- Federal tax estimate: \$5



Summer Job Cards

Ice-Cream Shop Worker

Pay: \$13/hour
Hours: 32/week
Weekly earnings: \$416

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$26
- Medicare: \$6
- Federal tax estimate: \$5

Grocery Store Cashier

Pay: \$14/hour
Hours: 35/week
Weekly earnings: \$490

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$30
- Medicare: \$7
- Federal tax estimate: \$7

Fast-Food Crew Member

Pay: \$14.50/hour
Hours: 36/week
Weekly earnings: \$522

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$32
- Medicare: \$8
- Federal tax estimate: \$8

Camp Counselor Assistant

Pay: \$15/hour
Hours: 35/week
Weekly earnings: \$525

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$33
- Medicare: \$8
- Federal tax estimate: \$8

Retail Store Associate

Pay: \$14/hour
Hours: 34/week
Weekly earnings: \$476

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$30
- Medicare: \$7
- Federal tax estimate: \$7

Movie Theater Worker

Pay: \$13/hour
Hours: 32/week
Weekly earnings: \$416

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$26
- Medicare: \$6
- Federal tax estimate: \$5



Summer Job Cards

Farm Stand Worker

Pay: \$13.50/hour
Hours: 34/week
Weekly earnings: \$459

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$28
- Medicare: \$7
- Federal tax estimate: \$6

Car Wash Attendant

Pay: \$14/hour
Hours: 35/week
Weekly earnings: \$490

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$30
- Medicare: \$7
- Federal tax estimate: \$7

Grocery Store Shelf Stocker

Pay: \$15/hour
Hours: 36/week
Weekly earnings: \$540

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$33
- Medicare: \$8
- Federal tax estimate: \$8

Delivery Driver

Pay: \$18/hour
Hours: 35/week
Weekly earnings: \$630

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$39
- Medicare: \$9
- Federal tax estimate: \$9

Daycare Helper

Pay: \$14/hour
Hours: 34/week
Weekly earnings: \$476

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$30
- Medicare: \$7
- Federal tax estimate: \$7

Tutor

Pay: \$18/hour
Hours: 30/week
Weekly earnings: \$540

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$32
- Medicare: \$7
- Federal tax estimate: \$8



Summer Job Cards

Bakery Assistant

Pay: \$14/hour
Hours: 32/week
Weekly earnings: \$448

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$28
- Medicare: \$6
- Federal tax estimate: \$6

Hardware Store Helper

Pay: \$15/hour
Hours: 35/week
Weekly earnings: \$525

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$33
- Medicare: \$8
- Federal tax estimate: \$8

Pool Snack Bar Worker

Pay: \$13/hour
Hours: 34/week
Weekly earnings: \$442

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$27
- Medicare: \$6
- Federal tax estimate: \$6

Ice Rink Attendant

Pay: \$16/hour
Hours: 36/week
Weekly earnings: \$576

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$36
- Medicare: \$8
- Federal tax estimate: \$9

Campgrounds Assistant

Pay: \$17/hour
Hours: 36/week
Weekly earnings: \$612

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$38
- Medicare: \$9
- Federal tax estimate: \$9

Thrift Store Cashier

Pay: \$14/hour
Hours: 32/week
Weekly earnings: \$448

Taxes withheld:

- Social Security: \$28
- Medicare: \$6
- Federal tax estimate: \$6



Saving Goals

If you're not sure what to write for your saving goals on the Paycheck Planning Worksheet, you can use one of the examples below or use them as inspiration to create a goal of your own.

<p>Save for a used car \$120 per week</p>	<p>Build an emergency fund \$25 per week</p>	<p>Concert and music festival fund \$60 per week</p>	<p>New gaming console or PC upgrade \$75 per week</p>	<p>College savings fund \$100 per week</p>
<p>Vacation / road trip fund \$80 per week</p>	<p>Shopping fund for clothes and shoes \$50 per week</p>	<p>New phone upgrade fund \$65 per week</p>	<p>Save for a laptop or tablet \$90 per week</p>	<p>Hobby fund \$40 per week</p>
<p>Iced coffee / sweet treat budget \$35 per week</p>	<p>Gym membership \$15 per week</p>	<p>Travel fund for future trip \$70 per week</p>	<p>Future apartment savings \$110 per week</p>	<p>Driving expenses (gas, insurance, etc.) \$55 per week</p>
<p>Save for new bike / skateboard \$60 per week</p>	<p>Charity or giving fund \$25 per week</p>	<p>Personal savings account \$35 per week</p>	<p>Weekend entertainment fund \$30 per week</p>	<p>Food delivery fund \$45 per week</p>

Die Template

Cut out on the solid lines, fold on the dotted lines. Assemble the cube to make a paper die.

