



## DE DOCS: MONEY MASTERY

Use this classroom activity before or after showing [DE Docs: Money Mastery](#). This activity can be used beforehand to get students thinking about how people make spending choices and increase student engagement with the video. If students watch the video first, the activity can be used to reinforce concepts discussed in the documentary, particularly needs and wants, budgeting, and making informed spending decisions.

ELEMENTARY and MIDDLE SCHOOL | GRADES 5–8

## DE Docs: Money Mastery | In-Depth Activity

### Title

# Needs and Wants Scavenger Hunt

## Overview

*How do you prioritize needs and wants and make purposeful spending decisions?*  
In this lesson, students engage in a classroom scavenger hunt to identify and differentiate between needs and wants within their learning environment. Through guided exploration, they search for items that meet specific criteria and then work in pairs or small groups to prioritize them based on their importance. The lesson concludes with a discussion emphasizing how personal values and perspectives influence financial decisions, helping students understand the importance of prioritizing needs over wants. The activity is designed to connect with themes from [DE Docs: Money Mastery](#) and reinforces key concepts such as budgeting and making informed spending decisions.

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Identify and differentiate between needs and wants.
- Prioritize items based on their necessity, recognizing that this can differ among individuals.
- Collaborate with peers to compare and discuss different perspectives on needs and wants.
- Apply critical thinking to rank items based on level of need and want.
- Reflect on how the concept of needs versus wants can be applied to personal financial decisions.

## National Standards for Personal Financial Literacy

II. Spending 4–1: People differ in their preferences, priorities, and resources available for consuming goods and services.

II. Spending 4–2: Money can be spent to increase one’s own or another individual’s personal satisfaction or to share the cost of goods and services.

III. Saving 4–2: A savings plan is a plan for setting aside money to pay for a future need, goal, or emergency.

III. Saving 4–3: People differ in their values and attitudes about saving.

# Pathway to Financial Success

In Schools

## MATERIALS

- [DE Docs: Money Mastery Video](#)
- **Classroom Scavenger Hunt Student Capture Sheet**—one copy per student or pair of students
- **Scissors**—one per student
- **Strips of tape or glue sticks**—one per pair or small group of students
- **Blank sheets of paper**—one per pair or small group of students

## ALTERNATE APPROACH

If you want to get students up and moving around, invite them to move to the **You Do What? Sign** that matches the answer they chose for each career.

## Facilitator Tips

- This activity provides students with an opportunity to consider needs and wants in the classroom. This is because students often come from very different financial backgrounds. They can also have a wide range of values related to spending money. By using a classroom as an example, the activity allows students to hone the skill of prioritizing needs and wants without judgment of their personal circumstances.
- If you conduct the activity outside a traditional classroom, students can still use examples from their classroom to complete the lesson. They will simply need to picture a familiar classroom when thinking of items to match each description. Another option is to adjust some descriptions or provide alternatives to match your environment.
- If students have access to technology, consider integrating digital tools to enhance engagement. For example, students could use tablets or computers to take pictures of the items they find during the scavenger hunt and create a digital collage of needs and wants. This could also tie into a final project where they present their findings using a slideshow or digital poster.

## Engage

- Tell students you are sending them on a scavenger hunt around the classroom.
- Let them know that you will give them a description and that you want them to look around the room to find something that matches the description. Ask them to raise their hand once they find something that meets the description.
- Announce the first challenge: Find something with letters on it.
- Remind students to stay in their seats and just look for an item for now.
- Once most students have raised their hands, call on them to share what they have located. Allow students to repeat items for this first round.
- In the second round, tell students you want them to find three things. Students can remain seated or get up and move around the room. Write the following descriptions on the board or display them on a flip chart or slide.
  - Find something that:
    - is taken home at night.
    - wasn't in the classroom on the first day of class.
    - would take a ladder to reach.
- Direct students to find items to match these descriptions and remember them or write them on a scrap sheet of paper.
- Invite several students to share what they found to match each description. Point out that many items could meet each description.

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- Select several of the items students found and discuss whether each one is a need or a want for the classroom. Aim to showcase at least two of each. Discuss why each item is either a need (something you can't do without) or a want (something nice to have but not absolutely necessary).
- Congratulate students for doing an excellent job locating items that matched the descriptions. Let them know the next round will be a bit more challenging.

## Teach

- Distribute a copy of the **Classroom Scavenger Hunt Student Capture Sheet**.
- Direct students to work individually to find items matching as many descriptions as possible with the following guidance:
  - Only one item per description is needed.
  - You do not need to go in order.
  - It is okay if you don't find something that matches each description.
  - Do the best you can in the time you have.
  - If you can, identify items other students have not already picked.
  - Try to find both needs *and* wants when searching.
- Announce when it is time to begin the activity. If desired, let students walk around the room, locating items that match the descriptions.
- Monitor students as they search for items.
- Conduct a mid-point check-in for students to share an interesting item they've found. Provide guidance or clarification if needed.
- Once several students have found items for each description, announce that it is time to conclude the hunt and return to their seats.
- Distribute a pair of scissors to each student. Direct students to cut their list along the dotted lines to create 20 slips—each with a description and the item they found. Let them know they should continue cutting their paper into slips as you discuss some of the items they found.
- Select several descriptions and ask volunteers to share the items they located. Create a list of the items students named. Bring items that can be moved to the front of the class to display (for example, a book or scissors can be brought to the front, while a clock must stay where it is).
- Invite students to consider if the items they listed are classroom needs or wants. Discuss the reasons students have for classifying various items. Remind students that there isn't always a clear answer to this question and that people can have different opinions about what is a want and what is a need.
- Let students know people often have to prioritize the things they spend money on, including teachers preparing a classroom.
- Share with students that they will be working in pairs or small groups to create a list using some of the items they selected. To form their lists, each student should turn their slips of paper over and then take turns picking slips from each pile at random. Tell students how many slips they should include in their final list. Younger students should select fewer items, while older students can create longer lists.

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- Challenge students to work with their partner(s) to compare and order their lists. From top to bottom, items should be listed as follows:
  - High-priority needs
  - Highly wanted but not needed
  - Somewhat wanted
  - Extras that are neither needed nor wanted (Not all lists will have these.)
- Allow time for students to work together to create their lists. Once done, they can **tape** them together or **glue** them to a **blank sheet of paper**.

### Conclude

- Direct students to find another group and compare their lists. Challenge each pair or group to consider if they would have put the items in the same order. If not, what would they change and why?
- Encourage students to explain why they placed certain items in higher or lower-priority categories.
- Bring the entire class together for a discussion using one or more of the questions below:
  - How did your opinions differ when it came to ordering the lists?
  - If you were given a certain amount of money to set up a classroom, would you only buy the items at the top of your list?
  - How might your priorities change if you were given more or less money to spend?
  - In what ways do your personal values and perspectives influence financial decisions? For example, if you really like art, how might that impact what you'd prioritize when spending?
  - What would change if you made a list of needs and wants for home instead of the classroom?
- Direct students to submit an exit ticket answering the question: How can you apply the idea of prioritizing needs and wants in your own life when making decisions about earning, spending, or saving?

### Extend

- **Classroom Budget Challenge:** Provide students with a hypothetical budget and a list of classroom items. Direct them to work in groups to decide how to allocate the money, considering which items are needs and which are wants.
- **Design a Dream Classroom:** Ask students to design their ideal classroom, listing all the items they would include. Then challenge students to separate their list into needs and wants, explaining their choices.
- **Role-Playing:** Offer students an opportunity to role-play as teachers or parents making decisions about what to buy for a classroom or household. They must explain their choices, focusing on prioritizing needs over wants.
- **Peer Teaching:** Challenge students to create a mini-presentation, infographic, or poster about the differences between needs and wants. Consider ways they might be able to present their work to younger students or their peers.
- **Guest Speaker:** Invite a school administrator to talk about how they prioritize spending for the school. Students can prepare questions about needs and wants to ask the guest speaker.
- **Family:** Invite students to perform a similar scavenger hunt at home, identifying items they think are needs or wants and then discussing their findings with their family.

# Needs and Wants Scavenger Hunt

**Directions:** How many items can you find that fit the descriptions below? List the item you locate after each description.

## Find something that...

## Item

- 
1. helps you learn.

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  2. makes the classroom more fun or enjoyable.

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  3. is used every day by the teacher or students.

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  4. you really like having in the room.

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  5. helps you or a classmate do better in school.

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  6. is mainly for decoration.

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  7. the teacher uses to do their job.

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  8. is there to keep you safe or healthy.

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  9. you think is a treat or reward.

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  10. could be used for both work and play.

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  11. helps the class stay organized.

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  12. could be shared by everyone in the class.

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  13. helps you stay comfortable in the classroom.

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  14. helps you focus or pay attention.

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  15. is used to communicate or send messages.

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  16. a teacher considers important.

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  17. helps the class work together as a team.

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  18. makes learning easier.

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  19. helps you be creative or express yourself.

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  20. you would miss if it were gone.

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