

Junior Savvy Shopper

Financial Literacy 2

Food and water, clean clothes, a place to live: these are things everyone needs.

A closet full of shoes, a new desk, tickets to a movie: these are things people want.

But, how do you figure out what you need and what you want? You might find it's not as easy as you think!

Steps

1. Explore your needs and wants
2. Look into why you want what you want
3. Find out what makes people happy (or not!) with what they buy
4. Learn how to decide what to buy
5. Make a plan to buy something you need or want

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know the difference between what I need and what I want – and I'll be able to smartly save money for both.

"If you want to feel rich, just count the things you have that money can't buy."

-Proverb

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more.

Step 1 Explore your needs and wants

Pick one of the following choices to start exploring the difference between your needs and your wants.

CHOOSE ONE:

Go on a home tour. Starting in the room where you sleep, write down at least five items in each room of your home. Write each item on its own scrap of paper. When you've completed your tour, find an open space and line up the papers from the item you need the most to the item you need the least. Then, discuss your order with a friend or family member.

OR

Make a collage. Gather your Girl Scout friends and a stack of magazines and newspapers. Flip through them together and cut out at least 50 items. Use these items to create a collage that shows a progression from things you all think are wants to those you think are needs.

OR

Take a survey. Ask at least 20 classmates to list five things they need and five things they want. Compile the lists, making sure to delete duplicate answers. How do the responses compare to your own needs and wants? Are there any items that some students consider a need, while others consider them a want? Are there any wants or needs of which you didn't think?

Step 2 Look into why you want what you want

Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between what you need and what you want. Advertisers create exciting commercials to convince you to buy things. Or, you might want something simply because your best friend has it. Think about all the forces that make you want something you may not need.

CHOOSE ONE:

Log your wants. For a week, write a list of every item that makes you think, "I want that," and jot down where you saw the item. At the end of the week, go through the list, and make a note of how many of those items you're still thinking about and of how many you have forgotten. Take a look at what triggers you to want something. Talk about what you've learned with a family member or friend.

OR

Investigate the latest trends. Talk to at least 10 people from different places, like your school, place of worship, or Girl Scout group. Ask each person to list what they think are the three most popular or trendy items. Compile the answers, and check off those that you want as well. Do you feel like you're influenced by trends? Why or why not?

OR

Do some time travel! Find 10 items that girls your age wanted in the past. What were the toys, clothes, and games that were the most popular? Then find 10 items that girls needed back then. Compile the wants and needs from the past with the things you want and need today. Which ones are different? Are any the same? Talk about what you've found with family or friends.

More to EXPLORE

Write a play or short story about a girl traveling through time to the present day. How would a girl from 1850 (or 1950) react to a modern shopping mall or TV commercials?

100 Years of Needs and Wants!

Clothing Shoes Body Care Products Games
Books Communication Music

Do an internet search for differences

Step 3 Find out what makes people happy (or not!) with what they buy

"Buyer's remorse" is the sense of disappointment people sometimes have after buying an expensive item. Often, they've convinced themselves that they really need something – like the latest video game or a new necklace – only to discover afterwards that it wasn't truly necessary. Of course, when you think through your reasons for buying something and save the money to get it, you can end up feeling very happy with your purchase.

CHOOSE ONE:

Family stories. Talk to people in your family about a big purchase in their life. What decisions did they go through before buying it? Find out how they felt right after making the purchase – and, then, how they felt a week later, a month later, and even a year later. Did their feelings change at all?

OR

Trade stories with friends. Odds are, every one of your friends has had the experience of really loving something they bought – or wishing they hadn't bought it. Team up with your Junior friends and swap shopping stories. As a group, come up with a list of tips, based on what each girl learned.

OR

Analyze customer reviews. Pick a big-ticket item like an expensive appliance, computer, or even a car. Then, team up with an adult to research customer reviews online. Pay particular attention to those reviews where people were either extremely happy with their purchase or extremely upset. What kinds of complaints did people express about the products? What kinds of things made them happy?

Step 4 Learn how to decide what to buy

Even when you're buying something you need, you'll find you might have certain wants. For example, you may need a computer for school – but you want the top-of-the-line model with a super-fast processor. You may need new running shoes – but you want a famous brand. Practice making these decisions on a pretend shopping trip (you don't need to actually buy anything).

Dollar Dilemmas

- Would you be willing to spend all your savings to buy a new bike – even if that meant you couldn't go to the movies with your friends for a year?
- Would you give up buying snacks for three months in order to buy a new swimsuit?
- Would you give up buying a cool new pair of shoes in order to buy 25 tunes for your music player?

CHOOSE ONE:

Visit the mall. Start by picking an item that comes with different options at different prices, such as a computer or a personal music player. Compare two or three versions to find out what makes them different and how that affects the price. Talk to your friends and family about whether you think extra options are worth the money or whether you would give them up for a lower price.

OR

Shop for groceries. The next time your family goes grocery shopping, ask to tag along. Pick at least 10 items that your family usually buys, and compare them to other options. Discuss with your family whether it's worth exchanging any of the items for a lower-priced version? Why or why not?

OR

Go on a comparison scavenger hunt. Team up with some Girl Scout friends to turn your shopping experiment into a scavenger hunt at your local mall. Pick an item like a computer or a TV that comes with a wide range of features and price options. Give everyone 30 minutes to find inexpensive, average, and expensive price options. For each option, write down what features are included – for example, the most expensive TV might offer 3-D technology. Then regroup and share what you've learned.

Step 5 Make a plan to buy something you need or want

Now, you're ready to put what you've learned about wants and needs into action! Once you've set your goal, create a budget and a plan.

CHOOSE ONE:

Help with a family purchase. Come up with at least one item that you need and one item that you want. Discuss your choices with your family, and agree on what you will buy. Then, work together to come up with a budget that will let you get what you need, as well as a plan to save for what you want.

OR

Make a plan for your cookie money. Make a group decision about how to use the money your Girl Scout friends earned selling cookies. Start by brainstorming your needs and your wants – and let everyone know that they are no bad suggestions! Write your list on a board and divide into teams. Have each team pick their top three items, and, then, present their choices to the entire group. Once all the teams have presented their ideas, have a group vote to decide how to use your money.

OR

Look into your future! Imagine yourself 10 years in the future. What are 10 items that you think you'll need on a day-to-day basis? And what are 10 items you think you'll want to have? Create a time capsule that includes both lists, and seal it with a promise not to open it for 10 years.

Cookie Money Plans

- You might want to buy snacks for your meetings or supplies for your next campout.
- You might want to use the money for field trips or Journey celebrations.
- You might want to buy things you need for your Take action project or your Bronze Award project.

Add the Badge to Your Journey

When you're brainstorming Take Action ideas, think about community needs and wants. Which project ideas will help with needs? Are some ideas more focused on wants?

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Sharing tips with my friends when they want to make a big purchase
- Helping younger Girl Scouts make plans for using the money from their cookie sale
- Teaming up with my family to come up with grocery shopping guidelines, such as how much "wants" we can have on each trip to the store

I'm inspired to: