



What Young Children Can Learn

How children learn has been the subject of a great deal of research. Although scientists have learned much, there is no agreement about what children are able to understand about the world by age five.

To say what a preschool child is *capable of knowing* about money means applying observations to test findings. To say what your preschool child *should know* about money is up to you.

The task force that developed these resources welcomes further study of how children learn about money. In the meantime, it offers the activities as suggestions for parents who want to learn, with their children, about using money wisely.

The following principles of how children develop guided the task force. *Many children* by age five, can:

Count to 10 or more. They can say the numbers in order. They can read the numerals and determine a total in a group. They can tell which number is more when the difference is two or three. They also know the meaning of the word “equals” in comparing two groups of objects. (1)

Compare two or more items by one feature at a time. They use words to compare and describe relationships such as bigger/smaller, heavier/lighter, and more/less. (1, 2)

Tell different forms and amounts of money apart. They know many of the names of money. But they do not always identify the values of various coins and bills or sum their values correctly. (1, 2, 3, 4)

Understand that money is a medium of exchange. They see that some goods and services cost more than others. They understand that money should be kept in a safe place. They recognize that, in some way, checks and credit cards work like money. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Choose among limited options. They can pick one option as long as there are not more than two or three choices. They understand that money is limited and can be used up. (3, 5)

Have a highly personal sense of time. They use terms such as minute, hour, week, month, and year, but might not understand how these periods compare. (6)

Wait and save. They accept the need to wait for a turn. They recognize that future events are delayed. They understand that they can save money for future spending. (1, 3)

Understand that work is a source of income. They know that people work to earn money. They are aware of various jobs. They like to pretend to be a worker by imitating adults. (1, 5)

Understand that people can be different and the same. They recognize that others have ideas and wants that match or conflict with theirs. They understand that families can be different and the same in their ways of doing things. (1)

Work with others. They can adjust their own actions to the needs and desires of others as long as the personal sacrifice is not too great. They can share limited materials according to group rules. They recognize that people perform unpaid tasks. (1, 5)

Be well on the way to becoming readers. They typically cannot recognize many words in print. However, they show many reading skills. For example, they can name letters and hold a book properly. They understand that stories have beginnings and ends. They can tell about their own experiences and retell a story, using pictures as memory cues. (1)

Respond to ads without understanding how they work. Although preschoolers try to persuade others, they do not see that advertising tries to do the same. For this reason, they cannot learn to be critical of ad claims. (7)

Find “How can I teach my preschooler about money” activities at www.creditunion.coop.

Sources:

(1) Schickedanz, J.A., Pergantis, M.L., Kanosky, J., Blaney, A., and Ottinger, J. (1997) *Curriculum in early childhood: A resource guide for preschool and kindergarten teachers*. Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon.

(2) A few state departments of public instruction have established educational expectations or learning standards for preschool children. Examples include:



Idaho Early Learning Standards: A Resource Guide to Mathematics. (2003). Idaho Early Learning Standards: A Resource Guide (pp. 36-45). Idaho Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education: Boise.
<http://www.sde.state.id.us/specialed/defaultold.asp>

Mathematics pre-k indicators (2003). Mathematics Early Learning Resource Document (pp. 11-14). Ohio Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education: Columbus.
http://www.ode.state.oh.us/ece/pdf/math_resource.pdf

Mathematics curriculum standards. South Carolina State Department of Education, Office of Curriculum and Standards: Columbia.
<http://www.myschools.com/offices/cso/standards/math/>

(3) Crites, A.M., and Behal, P.A. (1998). *Your preschooler & money*. FS-98-86. University of Nevada Cooperative Extension: Reno
<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/FS98/FS9886.pdf>

(4) Eliason, C. and Jenkins, L. (2003). *A practical guide to early childhood curriculum* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education, Inc.

(5) Danes, S.M. (1992). *Teaching children money habits for life*. FO-6116. Minnesota Extension Service: St. Paul.
<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/youthdevelopment/DA6116.html>

(6) Briod M. (1986). *The Young Child's Sense of Time and the Clock*. Phenomenology + Pedagogy, Vol.4, No.1, pp. 9-19
<http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/articles/briod.html>

(7) Kunkel, D., Wilcox, B. L., Cantor, J., Palmer, E., Linn, S., Dowrick, P. (2004). *Report of the APA task force on advertising and children, Section: Psychological issues in the increasing commercialization of childhood*. American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, DC.
<http://www.apa.org/releases/childrenads.pdf>

