

How can I teach my preschooler about using money to buy something?

Children often see adults exchanging coins and bills when they buy things. However, they do not usually get a chance to see and count the money. Playing store is a good way for children to learn how to use money to buy things.

A Play Store

Materials needed:

- Pennies (as many as you can find), small slips of paper, a pencil, and a roll of clear tape
- Chairs and low tables can be shelves and a checkout counter
- Favorite toys and other personal items for sale
- Optional materials: play cash register or cardboard box, paper bag (to carry “purchases”), and a wallet or purse



Decide how many pennies each item costs.

Step 1: Explain what you will be doing together (read through entire activity before you begin)

The two of you will set up a make-believe store. Your child will be able to pretend to buy and sell items at the play store.



Your child “buys” items by matching pennies.

Step 2: Choose the items for sale in the play store
Help your child choose favorite personal belongings to sell in the pretend store.

Step 3: Decide penny prices

Decide how many pennies each item costs. Start with one to ten pennies. Help your child put the number of pennies needed to buy each item on a piece of clear tape. Make sure you set half of the pennies aside for your child to purchase the items. These coins will show how many pennies are needed to buy the item.

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Write the number of pennies needed to buy each item on a small piece of paper. Explain to your child that this is the price tag. Tape the pennies to the price tag. If your child can recognize numbers without your help, try setting prices using numbers only.

Step 4: Shop at the play store

Tell your child that you will pretend to be the cashier at the store. Your child can pretend to be the shopper. Give your child enough pennies to buy several items. Let your child select items to buy. Your child can pay for each item by matching the number of pennies. Help your child count out the pennies for each item.

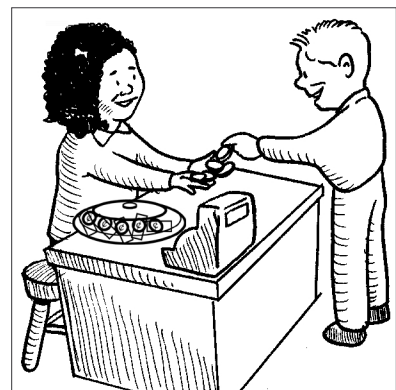
Ideas to talk about

- ★ Buying something means exchanging money for it.
- ★ The amount of money needed to buy something is called its price. Different items have different prices.
- ★ Coins (and paper money) have different values.
- ★ Shoppers who don't have enough money for something have two choices. They can save to buy it another time or they can buy something else.

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Make playing store more interesting by changing the "rules." Examples:

- Trade places and let your child be the cashier and you be the shopper.
- Help your child set up and play store with a friend.
- Tape one or two nickels to items and let your child buy them by matching the price with the correct number of pennies. As your child learns the coins' values, add dimes and then quarters to the play store.
- Teach older children how to show and read prices with dollar signs and cent signs.



Help your child set up and play store with a friend.

This activity goes well with "Shopping Helper" (in "How can I teach my preschooler to help with the shopping?").

Find more "How can I teach my preschooler about money" activities at www.creditunion.coop.

