

# Bouncing ball budgets

Through an interactive game, students share spending decisions they've made in the past and start to think about their spending habits in new ways.

## Learning goals

### Big idea

As consumers, people make spending and saving decisions all the time.

### Essential questions

- When I receive money, do I tend to save it or spend it?
- What are my spending habits?

### Objectives

- Practice active listening and reflect on their own spending habits
- Realize that spending decisions often reflect habits that develop over time

### NOTE

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Please remember to consider your students' accommodations and special needs to ensure that all students are able to participate in a meaningful way.

### KEY INFORMATION

Building block:

 Financial habits and norms

Grade level: High school (9-12)

Age range: 13-19

Topic: Spend (Budgeting, Buying things)

School subject: CTE (Career and technical education), Physical education or health

Teaching strategy: Gamification

Bloom's Taxonomy level: Remember, Understand

Activity duration: 15-20 minutes

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### National Standards for Personal Financial Education, 2021

Saving: 8-2, 12-9

Spending: 8-1, 12-1, 12-5, 12-9

These standards are cumulative, and topics are not repeated in each grade level. This activity may include information students need to understand before exploring this topic in more detail.

## What students will do

- Form a circle and toss or bounce the ball to different classmates.
- Answer a question about their spending habits based on the number they see when they catch the ball.
- Reflect on their own spending habits as they listen to classmates' answers.

## Preparing for this activity

- While it's not necessary, completing the "[Analyzing budgets](#)" activity first may make this one more meaningful.
- Print the "[Bouncing ball budgets game: 10 questions for students](#)" list in this guide to use during the game.
- Get a ball (blow-up beach ball, volleyball, soccer ball, or other large and light ball) to use for this game and write or tape the numbers 1-10 on different areas of the ball.

### What you'll need

#### THIS TEACHER GUIDE

- [Bouncing ball budgets \(guide\)](#)  
[cfpb\\_building\\_block\\_activities\\_bouncing-ball-budgets\\_guide.pdf](#)
- "[Bouncing ball budgets game: 10 questions for students](#)" list (in this guide)

#### STUDENT MATERIALS

- A blow-up beach ball, volleyball, soccer ball, or other large and light ball

## Exploring key financial concepts

Knowing how to make a budget is an important first step toward reaching your financial goals. A budget is a plan for how to spend and save money. Budgets can inform spending decisions and help people develop habits that support financial well-being.

When thinking about budgeting, it's often helpful to think about spending decisions. Many spending decisions are the result

### TIP

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Because financial products, terms, and laws change, students should be encouraged to always look for the most up-to-date information.

of habits developed over time. So it's helpful to take time to reflect on your own spending practices and determine if you can benefit by making some changes. For example, if you regularly spend a lot of money on things you don't need, or spend without considering costs, now's the time to develop some healthy financial habits and norms about spending.

## Teaching this activity

### Whole-class introduction

- Ask students to share examples of a spending habit.
  - Examples may include buying things on impulse or thinking about purchases a long time before you make them.
- Read the "Exploring key financial concepts" section to students.
- Be sure students understand key vocabulary:
  - **Budget:** A plan that outlines what money you expect to earn or receive (your income) and how you will save it or spend it (your expenses) for a given period of time; also called a spending plan.
  - **Habit:** A tendency or usual manner of behavior that has been acquired.
- Introduce the game to your students. Explain that the ball has the numbers 1 through 10 on it, and each number corresponds to a question about spending habits.
- Point out that the questions are designed to get them thinking about their own spending habits, both now and in the future. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Define the parameters for the game.
  - One-word answers are not sufficient. Students should give some detail or an example.
  - Students will have only 30 seconds, so their responses should be brief, yet clear.
- The same questions will come up multiple times but will be answered by different students.

#### TIP

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Visit CFPB's financial education glossary at [consumerfinance.gov/financial-education-glossary/](https://consumerfinance.gov/financial-education-glossary/).

## Group work

- Toss or bounce the ball to a student.
- When the student catches the ball, have them call out the number closest to their right index finger.
- Ask the student the question that corresponds to that number (see the list at the end of this guide), or have another student read the question.
- Give each student up to 30 seconds to answer the question. You may need to ask them clarifying questions to draw out a full answer. You can use the information in the list's "Expanding understanding" column to add to the conversation.
- When the student has finished answering their question, ask them to toss the ball back to you or have them toss it to another student.
- Continue the game until one of three things happen: the time you've allotted for the activity runs out; all 10 questions have been answered; or all students have had a turn.

## Wrap-up

If you have time, ask the students to share one thing they learned or want to remember about spending or budgeting from this activity.

## Suggested next steps

Consider searching for other [CFPB activities](#) that address the topic of spending, including budgeting and buying things. Suggested activities include ["Analyzing budgets"](#) and ["Differentiating fixed and variable expenses"](#).

## Measuring student learning

Students' answers during the game and during discussion can give you a sense of their understanding. **Keep in mind that students' answers may vary, as there may not be only one right answer.** The important thing is for students to have reasonable justification for their answers.

# Bouncing ball budgets game: 10 questions for students

Print one copy of these questions for the game. Feel free to share the information in the “Expanding understanding” column to add to the discussion.

## Rules

- One-word answers are not sufficient. Give some detail or an example.
- Keep answers brief – no more than 30 seconds.
- There are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

Question	Expanding understanding
1. What have you heard adults talk about budgeting for?	Adults make budgets to manage monthly expenses, but they also make budgets to prepare for a trip, an event (like a wedding), or a house repair.
2. Give an example of a big expense you or someone you know has had to save money for.	Because big purchases (like a phone or a prom dress) or events (like a class trip) may cost more than one month’s spending money, you may need to save for them.
3. What’s something you purchased yesterday or in the past week?	Thinking about recent purchases can help you reflect on your own spending habits.
4. Why might it be worthwhile to keep a coin bank?	Habits that require little effort but can result in a large payout can help you develop financial well-being.
5. If you get or earn money, do you usually spend it or save it?	Making a savings plan can help you develop habits that support financial well-being.
6. When you shop or go on vacation, why might it be helpful to track your spending?	Tracking your spending is part of sticking to a budget. Budgeting helps ensure you have enough money for your needs, your wants, and your goals.
7. Give an example of why you might call yourself a saver or a spender.	Become aware of your own tendencies for saving and spending. Creating a balance between saving and spending can help you reach your financial goals.
8. What strategies do you or someone you know use for saving or budgeting money?	People can learn many helpful saving strategies from one another (e.g., put a certain percentage of earnings into savings, make monthly savings goals).

Question	Expanding understanding
9. What do you or someone you know find hard to resist spending money on?	Knowing your spending temptations helps you plan solutions for resisting impulsive expenditures so you can stick to a budget.
10. How do your spending habits compare to adult family members' habits?	Spending habits change over time and as your lifestyle, responsibilities, and income level change.