

Choosing the best cell phone plan for you

Students research the features and costs of cell phones and cell phone plans and use a decision matrix to compare options and determine the best one for their needs, wants, and budget.

Learning goals

Big idea

Product research and comparison shopping help you make informed buying decisions.

Essential questions

- How do product research and comparison shopping help you make more informed buying decisions?
- What features might you compare before making a purchase?

Objectives


- Research and compare features offered by cell phone carriers
- Analyze data collected to make an informed buying decision

NOTE

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 knowledge and decision-making skills

Grade level: High school (9-12)

Age range: 13-19

Topic: Spend (Budgeting, Buying things)

School subject: CTE (Career and technical education), Math, Social studies or history

Teaching strategy: Blended learning, Personalized instruction

Bloom's Taxonomy level: Analyze, Evaluate

Activity duration: 75-90 minutes

National Standards for Personal Financial Education, 2021

Spending: 12-2, 12-3, 12-5

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

- Conduct research to identify features and costs of two cell phone plans.
- Analyze and compare the data gathered on different features.
- Decide on a cell phone plan that meets their needs, wants, and budget.

Preparing for this activity

- While it's not necessary, completing the "Making spending decisions" activity first may make this one more meaningful.
- Print copies of all student materials for each student, or prepare for students to access them electronically.
- Secure a computer or tablet with Internet access for each student or pair of students to research cell phone plans. If that's not possible, you can do the research yourself and print out a few cell phone plans for students to use.
- To support Spanish-speaking students, there is a Spanish version of this activity.
 - You can use the worksheet (https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_building_block_activities_como-escoger-el-mejor-plan-de-celular_tabla.pdf) and the handout (https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_building_block_activities_herramienta-de-comparacion-de-compras_folleto.pdf).
 - A Spanish version of the guide is available at https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_building_block_activities_como-escoger-el-mejor-plan-de-celular_guia.pdf.

What you'll need

THIS TEACHER GUIDE

- Choosing the best cell phone plan for you (guide)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_choosing-best-cell-phone-plan_guide.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_building_block_activities_choosing-best-cell-phone-plan_guide.pdf)

STUDENT MATERIALS

- Choosing the best cell phone plan for you (worksheet)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_choosing-best-cell-phone-plan_worksheet.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_building_block_activities_choosing-best-cell-phone-plan_worksheet.pdf)
- Comparison shopping tool (handout)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_comparison-shopping-tool_handout.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_building_block_activities_comparison-shopping-tool_handout.pdf)
- Computers or tablets with Internet access or copies of cell phone plans

Exploring key financial concepts

Comparison shopping means comparing prices, features, benefits, risks, and other characteristics of two or more similar products or services. When making a purchase, researching more than one product or brand and comparing features, benefits, and costs can help you better understand your options. Comparison shopping may help you make more informed buying decisions.

TIP

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

Teaching this activity

Whole-class introduction

- Ask students to share examples of times they or someone they know had to choose between brands or versions when shopping.
 - Examples may include shoes, clothing, food, cell phones, or cars.
- Read the “Exploring key financial concepts” section to explain comparison shopping.
- Ask students to share why they think comparison shopping can be helpful.
- 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.
 - **Comparison shopping:** The practice of comparing prices, features, benefits, risks, and other characteristics of two or more similar products or services.

TIP

Visit CFPB’s financial education glossary at consumerfinance.gov/financial-education-glossary/.

Individual or group work

- Distribute the “Choosing the best cell phone plan for you” worksheet and the “Comparison shopping tool” handout, or have students access these documents electronically.
- Distribute computers or tablets or give students copies of cell phone plans.
- Ask students to imagine that they need a new cell phone and explain that they’ll research and compare two plans to find the one that fits their needs, wants, and budget.

- Working either individually or with a partner, students will complete the features table on the “Choosing the best cell phone plan for you” worksheet first and then complete the first two pages of the “Comparison shopping tool” handout.
- As they’re ready, ask students to complete the analysis section of the “Comparison shopping tool” handout.
- When they’ve finished this comparative analysis, they should return to the “Choosing the best cell phone plan for you” worksheet to document the cell phone plan that works best for them.
- Students will then answer the reflection questions on their own.

Wrap-up

If time allows, ask students to share their answers to the reflection questions.

Suggested next steps

Consider searching for other [CFPB activities](#) that address the topic of spending, including budgeting and buying things. Suggested activities include “[Creating a buying plan](#)” and “[Learning about sales tactics](#)”.

Measuring student learning

Students’ answers on their worksheets 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.