

Using idioms to promote saving

Students explore idioms, which are expressions that use figurative speech, to better understand financial concepts like saving and earning.

Learning goals

Big idea

Every language has wise sayings or phrases that offer advice on how to live responsibly and thoughtfully.

Essential questions

- What's an idiom?
- How can an idiom get me thinking about my relationship with money?

Objectives

- Read and analyze an idiom related to money
- Reflect on tips and life lessons learned from idioms

What students will do



- Review what an idiom is and explore one or two examples.
- Analyze an idiom and reflect on what they can learn from it.

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 habits and norms
-  Financial knowledge and decision-making skills

Grade level: Middle school (6-8)

Age range: 11-14

Topic: Save and invest (Choosing how to save)

School subject: CTE (Career and technical education), English or language arts

Teaching strategy: Direct instruction, Project-based learning

Bloom's Taxonomy level: Remember, Understand, Apply, Create

Activity duration: 45-60 minutes

National Standards for Personal Financial Education, 2021

Saving: 4-1, 4-2, 8-1, 8-2

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.

Preparing for this activity

- While it's not necessary, completing the "[Understanding who shapes your money decisions](#)" activity first may make this one more meaningful.
- Review the definition of an idiom.
- Print copies of all student materials for each student, or prepare for students to access them electronically.

What you'll need

THIS TEACHER GUIDE

- [Using idioms to promote saving \(guide\)](#)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_using-idioms-promote-savings_guide.pdf](#)

STUDENT MATERIALS

- [Using idioms to promote saving \(worksheet\)](#)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_using-idioms-promote-savings_worksheet.pdf](#)

Exploring key financial concepts

Each language has its own wise sayings or phrases that offer advice about life or share values. For example, the saying "Don't bite off more than you can chew" warns us not to take on more than we can handle. This saying is an idiom, a common expression that often uses figurative language. In figurative language, words and phrases are used creatively. So an idiom's actual meaning may differ greatly from the literal meaning of the words in the idiom. "Don't bite off more than you can chew" isn't really telling us not to put too much in our mouths. Idioms can help us understand important aspects of language and shared cultural expressions and perspectives.

Idioms can help explain useful ideas and practices related to money and saving. The practice of saving money requires planning, goal setting, and the ability to delay what you want now for a bigger reward later. Saving money is a habit that can help lead to financial well-being, which means that you can pay for your needs, cover unexpected events, and make choices to enjoy life.

TIP

Because savings 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 if anyone can describe what an idiom is.
 - Allow several students to add their ideas.
 - Be sure they understand that an idiom is:
 - A common expression whose meaning may be different from the meanings of the individual words in the expression.
 - A type of figurative language.
 - Explain that people use figurative language to help express ideas.
- Provide an example of an idiom and help the students analyze it.
 - Write or display this idiom on the board: “It was the straw that broke the camel’s back.”
 - Ask students to brainstorm the idiom’s literal meaning.
 - If necessary, explain that the idiom’s literal meaning is that a single straw actually broke the back of a camel.
 - Ask students to brainstorm the idiom’s figurative meaning.
 - If necessary, explain that the idiom’s figurative meaning is that after a series of bad things, one last bad thing happened that finally caused a big problem.
 - Encourage students to compare and contrast the example’s literal and figurative meanings so they understand the difference.
 - Then, ask them to imagine how the expression may have come to be. Why might those words have been chosen? How do the idiom’s words work together to create the expression’s meaning? Tell them they should approach this as if they’re analyzing a poem.
 - For example, no one would expect a single straw to break the back of a large animal like a camel, but when lots of little things pile on top of each other, the weight is too much to bear and it can cause terrible damage.
 - Ask students to reflect on the lesson in the idiom. What can they learn from it?
 - If necessary, explain that the lesson is that we should be aware of the big picture and not underestimate the impact of small things.

- Provide another example if students need a little more practice as a group.
 - Another example could be “Don’t put all of your eggs in one basket.”
- Be sure students understand key vocabulary:
 - **Idiom:** An expression whose meaning may be different from the meaning of the individual words in the expression.
 - **Savings:** Money you have set aside in a secure place, such as in a bank account, that you can use for future emergencies or to make specific purchases.

TIP

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

Individual and group work

- Explain that students will work in groups to analyze an idiom related to money.
- Distribute the “Using idioms to promote saving” worksheet.
- Divide students into groups of about four to six. Students will work together but will complete their own worksheets.
- Assign each group a different idiom.
- Students will:
 - Write the idiom’s literal meaning.
 - Describe the idiom’s figurative meaning.
 - Compare and contrast the idiom’s literal and figurative meanings.
- Circulate among the groups to be sure students can determine their idiom’s figurative meaning. You can give them hints and guidance if they get stuck.
- Students will then answer the reflection question.

Wrap-up

- Ask the groups to share the meaning of their idioms.
- As each group presents their answers, the other students will record the meanings on their worksheets.
- Bring the class together and ask for volunteers to share how understanding their assigned idiom can help them have a better relationship with money, develop better money habits, or make better life choices.

Suggested next steps

Consider searching for other [CFPB activities](#) that address the topic of saving, including choosing how to save. Suggested activities include [“Exploring savings habits”](#) and [“Saving for short- and long-term goals.”](#)

Measuring student learning

Students’ responses on their worksheets and during discussion can give you a sense of their understanding.

The answer guide provides some common interpretations of the featured idioms.

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 justifications for their answers.

Answer guide

This answer guide provides some common interpretations of the featured idioms.

#	Idiom	Meaning
1	Saving for a rainy day.	To put aside money for a later time of need.
2	A penny saved is a penny earned.	Saving money is as useful as earning it.
3	The best things in life are free.	Money can’t buy invaluable things like love or a beautiful sunset, so we shouldn’t prioritize things over relationships and experiences.
4	A fool and his money are soon parted.	An unwise or reckless person spends their money carelessly and can be easily tricked, so they’re more likely to lose it all.
5	Money doesn’t grow on trees.	Money doesn’t just appear; we have to work for it. Also, since there’s only a limited amount of money, we should be careful about how much we spend.
6	Money is the root of all evil.	Greed, or an excessive desire to have money or get rich, is one of the most common reasons people do terrible things to one another.