

LESSON PLAN

Good vs. Bad Spending

- IT'S A -
**MONEY
THING®**

INCLUDED IN THIS PACKAGE

- **LESSON PLAN** (2 pages)
- **ACTIVITY** (3 pages)
- **QUIZ** (1 page)
- **ACTIVITY ANSWER KEY** (2 pages)
- **QUIZ ANSWER KEY** (1 page)

COLLECT FROM YOUR LIBRARY

- **VIDEO 24** (*Good vs. Bad Spending*)
- **HANDOUT 24** (*Good vs. Bad Spending*)
- **PRESENTATION 24** (*Good vs. Bad Spending*)

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LESSON PLAN

Good vs. Bad Spending

GRADES

7 to 12

TIME

45 minutes



OVERVIEW

This lesson helps students rethink the idea of “good” and “bad” spending by focusing instead on intentional choices that support personal goals. Students will explore a three-step framework—Prioritize, Track and Reward—to understand how psychology, motivation and habits influence spending decisions.

GOALS

- Help students explore a practical, goal-focused approach to budgeting
- Encourage students to reflect on their own values, goals and spending habits

OBJECTIVES

- List the three steps for building a successful personal budget: Prioritize, Track and Reward
- Evaluate everyday spending choices based on how well they support personal goals and values
- Develop simple strategies for staying motivated and building positive spending habits over time

ASSESSMENT

Use the activity in this lesson plan to assess students' grasp of the topic. An optional quiz is also provided (the quiz is not factored into the lesson's 45-minute runtime).

Did you know? This lesson plan explores concepts from Standard 2 (Spending) from the **Council for Economic Education's National Standards for Personal Financial Education**.

MATERIALS

- ☐ **VIDEO 24**—Good vs. Bad Spending
- ☐ **HANDOUT 24**—Good vs. Bad Spending
- ☐ **PRESENTATION 24**—Good vs. Bad Spending
- ☐ **ACTIVITY**—Budget Quest and Answer Key
- ☐ **QUIZ**—Good vs. Bad Spending and Answer Key

PREPARATION

- Gather digital materials (video and presentation)
- Print **HANDOUT 24** for each student
- Prepare the **ACTIVITY**: Print one copy of the Activity for each pair or small group (or for each student, if playing individually). Review the Answer Key and print a copy for reference.
- (Optional) Print **QUIZ** (Good vs. Bad Spending) for each student

Good vs. Bad Spending

- 5 minutes** Introduce topic and show **VIDEO 24** (*Good vs. Bad Spending*)
- 10 minutes** Go over **PRESENTATION 24**
- 25 minutes** Facilitate the **ACTIVITY** and distribute **HANDOUT 24**
- 5 minutes** Wrap up discussion
- (Optional)** Assessment: **QUIZ** (*Good vs. Bad Spending*)

- Upon completing all three puzzles, students receive **HANDOUT 24** to take home as a budgeting reference
5. Wrap up with a brief discussion:
 - Which step—Prioritize, Track or Reward—do you think would be hardest to stick with? Why?
 - How does having a goal in mind affect the way you decide what to spend money on?
 - What's one small habit or strategy you could try this month?
 6. (Optional) Distribute **QUIZ** for individual assessment, or answer the questions together as a class; decide whether or not students can reference their notes/handouts during the quiz

1. Introduce the topic: “When people talk about money, they often label spending as good or bad. Today, we’re going to look at a different way of thinking—one that focuses on goals, habits and motivation.”
2. Show **VIDEO 24**
3. Go over **PRESENTATION 24** to reinforce the three-step budgeting framework: Prioritize, Track and Reward
4. Facilitate the **ACTIVITY**
 - Divide students into pairs or small groups; students may also play individually if desired
 - Explain that students must solve a series of three puzzles representing the budgeting steps: Prioritize, Track and Reward
 - Explain that puzzles must be completed in order and that students must check in with the instructor before receiving the next puzzle
 - Distribute Puzzle 1: Prioritize
 - Review completed puzzles and provide the next one as groups progress

NOTES

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. A vertical red margin line runs down the left side of the page. The paper is oriented vertically and appears to be a standard notebook or worksheet template.



ACTIVITY

Good vs. Bad Spending

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BUDGET QUEST - PUZZLE 1: PRIORITIZE

Directions: Circle all the words in the word search. Words may appear in different directions, including backwards. Once you've found all the words, count the letters that are **not** circled as part of any word and use the legend below to discover your budgeting priority.

BUDGET
CHOICES
DECISIONS
GOALS
HABITS
MILESTONE
MONEY
PLAN
PROGRESS
PRIORITIZE
REWARD
SAVING
SPENDING
TRACK
VALUES

S	U	S	A	V	I	N	G	B	Y	Q	W
P	H	E	N	O	T	S	E	L	I	M	B
E	A	F	J	C	L	P	S	L	B	F	H
N	B	C	Z	M	T	L	U	M	C	D	Y
D	I	V	H	E	D	R	A	W	E	R	D
I	T	W	G	O	S	E	U	L	A	V	Q
N	S	D	E	C	I	S	I	O	N	S	P
G	U	W	S	S	E	C	M	W	S	S	L
B	J	V	L	M	Y	U	E	O	R	B	A
C	K	A	K	C	A	R	T	S	N	K	N
K	O	S	S	E	R	G	O	R	P	E	O
G	P	R	I	O	R	I	T	I	Z	E	Y

Your budgeting priority is...

25

Plan a dream
vacation

46

Get your
first car

13

Build an
emergency fund

32

Pay down credit
card debt

8

Start a small
business



ACTIVITY

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BUDGET QUEST – PUZZLE 2: TRACK

Directions: Below is one month of your income and spending as you begin tracking your money for the first time. Your budgeting priority is to get your first car. Review your Income and Spending Tracker carefully, then answer the four questions that follow.

Income and Spending Tracker		
Date	Description	Amount
June 2	Pay from part-time job	+\$240
June 4	Gas money for driving practice	-\$25
June 6	Cash from selling an old video game	+\$30
June 7	Fast food combo meal	-\$18
June 9	Movie night with friends	-\$15
June 12	Birthday money from family	+\$55
June 16	Driver's education class fee	-\$120
June 18	Monthly music streaming subscription	-\$12
June 20	Driving test fee	-\$35
June 21	Transfer to savings: Car fund	-\$80

1. How much **extra income** (not from a job) came in this month that could go toward the car goal?
2. How much was **spent** on things that support your priority?
3. How many purchases **do not** support the car goal?
4. How much money was moved into the car savings fund this month?

Add your answers from Questions 1–4. Write the total in the box.
You'll use this number in the next puzzle.



ACTIVITY

Good vs. Bad Spending

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BUDGET QUEST – PUZZLE 3: REWARD

Directions: Below is a grid of possible rewards. You are choosing one reward to celebrate your progress toward your budgeting goal. Work through the statements one at a time, crossing out rewards that don't fit, until you reveal the reward that makes the most sense for your progress so far.

To reveal your reward:

1. Cross out any rewards that cost hundreds of dollars.
2. Cross out any rewards that are repeated or ongoing expenses.
3. Cross out any rewards that are time-based or experience-based.
4. Cross out any rewards that cost more than about \$10.
5. Use the number you found in Puzzle 2 to choose your reward:
 - If the number is **under 200**, choose a reward that is used once and gone.
 - If the number is **200 or more**, choose a reward that lasts and reminds you of your goal.

A movie night with friends	Extra gaming time on the weekend	A new phone case in a style you like	A bumper sticker that shows off your personality
A set of custom car rims or specialty wheels	A brand-new outfit and pair of shoes	A short road trip with friends	Creating the ultimate driving playlist
A monthly streaming subscription	A bubble tea or coffee treat	A deluxe car wash and interior clean	A pair of front-row concert tickets
A designer backpack or bag	An arcade or bowling night with friends	A major phone upgrade to the latest model	A full theme park weekend

Write the remaining reward here:



QUIZ

Good vs. Bad Spending

NAME: _____

TOTAL
/ 6 pts

MATCHING

Directions: Match each step to the action that best describes it. Write the correct letter next to each step. Not all actions will be used.

ACTIONS

1. Prioritize: _____
2. Track: _____
3. Reward: _____

- a. Checking where your money goes over time
- b. Avoiding spending whenever possible
- c. Celebrating progress after reaching a budgeting milestone
- d. Making spending decisions based on what others are doing
- e. Writing down what you want to work toward and why it matters

/3 pts

SHORT ANSWER

Directions: Answer the following question in one or two sentences.

4. How can having a clear goal affect a spending decision?

/1 pt

TRUE OR FALSE

Directions: CIRCLE either true or false.

5. TRUE or FALSE Tracking your spending can help you notice progress and stay motivated.
6. TRUE or FALSE Rewards should only be used after reaching very large financial goals.

/2 pts

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ACTIVITY ANSWER KEY

Good vs. Bad Spending

BUDGET QUEST

Directions: Use this answer key to confirm student answers before distributing the next puzzle.
The Instructor Notes are intended to support facilitation and provide additional context. Students may use different reasoning paths and still arrive at the correct result.

PUZZLE 1: PRIORITIZE

Leftover letters: 46

Corresponding priority:
Get your first car

46

Get your
first car



Puzzle 1 Instructor Notes:

- If students arrive at the wrong number, encourage them to recount letters that are not part of any word.



ACTIVITY ANSWER KEY

Good vs. Bad Spending

BUDGET QUEST

PUZZLE 2: TRACK

1. How much extra income (not from a job) came in this month that could go toward the car goal?	\$85
2. How much was spent on things that support your priority?	\$180
3. How many purchases do not support the car goal?	3
4. How much money was moved into the car savings fund this month?	\$80
Total:	348

Puzzle 2 Instructor Notes:

- **Question 1:** The cash from selling the old video game and the birthday money are considered extra income.
- **Question 2:** The gas money for driving practice, the driver's education class fee and the driving test fee all support the priority of getting a first car. The transfer to savings is not included here and should not be counted as spending.
- **Question 3:** The fast food meal, the movie night and the monthly music streaming subscription do not contribute to the car goal, for a total of three purchases.
- **Question 4:** The transfer to the car savings fund is counted separately from spending.

PUZZLE 3: REWARD

The remaining reward is:

A bumper sticker that shows off your personality

Puzzle 3 Instructor Notes:

- Students may eliminate options in an unexpected order. As long as they arrive at the final reward and can explain their reasoning, their work is sound.
- Exact prices are not required to complete the cost-related statements successfully.
- If students ask what **time-based** or **experience-based rewards** mean, explain that these are activities or events, rather than physical products.
- All of the rewards shown are viable options for different goals or milestones. This puzzle highlights one reward as an example rather than a "correct" choice.



QUIZ ANSWER KEY

Good vs. Bad Spending

MATCHING

Directions: Match each step to the action that best describes it. Write the correct letter next to each step. Not all actions will be used.

1. Prioritize: E
2. Track: A
3. Reward: C

ACTIONS

- a. Checking where your money goes over time
- b. Avoiding spending whenever possible
- c. Celebrating progress after reaching a budgeting milestone
- d. Making spending decisions based on what others are doing
- e. Writing down what you want to work toward and why it matters

/3 pts

SHORT ANSWER

Directions: Answer the following question in one or two sentences.

4. How can having a clear goal affect a spending decision?

EXAMPLES: IT CAN GIVE YOU A GUIDE, MAKING IT EASIER TO AVOID IMPULSE

SPENDING; IT CAN MAKE SPENDING MORE PURPOSEFUL.

/1 pt

TRUE OR FALSE

Directions: CIRCLE either true or false.

5. TRUE or FALSE

Tracking your spending can help you notice progress and stay motivated.

6. TRUE or FALSE

Rewards should only be used after reaching very large financial goals.

/2 pts