

PFL Academy

Teacher Guide: Chapter 56 — Financial Record Keeping and Account Reconciliation

OVERVIEW

TIME	MATERIALS	PREREQUISITES
45-50 Minutes	Student Activity Packet, Calculator	Basic math skills, L-3 Income Management helpful

LESSON FLOW

5 min THE CHALLENGE

- Read Marcus's overdraft cascade story—\$210 in fees from one forgotten check.
- Ask: "Has anyone ever been surprised by an overdraft or mysterious charge?"
- Key point: Banking apps show what the bank knows, not what you've committed to spend.

10 min CORE CONCEPTS

- Distinguish "available balance" (bank's view) from "actual available" (your records).
- Explain outstanding transactions—checks written but not cashed, auto-pays scheduled.
- Demo the reconciliation process: statement balance + deposits not credited – outstanding payments = register balance.

25-30 min APPLY IT

- **Part A (10 min):** Checkbook register practice. Walk through first 2-3 transactions together, then have students complete independently.
- **Part B (10 min):** Reconciliation practice. This is where students learn why their register differs from statement.
- **Part C (5 min):** Error detection. Finding the \$35 calculation error teaches careful review.

10 min CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- Q1 tests real-world application—"how much can you actually spend?"
- Q3 (fraud detection) is critical—discuss small test charges preceding larger theft.
- Q5 asks for personal commitment to record-keeping system.

DIFFERENTIATION

Support

- Pre-fill the first few register entries as examples.
- Provide a reconciliation formula card students can reference.
- Work through Part B together as a class before independent work.
- Use color-coding: green for deposits, red for withdrawals.

Extension

- Create a more complex scenario with multiple outstanding transactions.
- Have students research and compare financial tracking apps (Mint, YNAB, etc.).
- Calculate annual cost of poor record keeping (average household overdraft fees).
- Design a personal tracking system and present to class.

ANSWER KEY

Part A: Checkbook Register Practice

Starting Balance: \$1,245.80
3/1 - Rent: \$1,245.80 - \$825.00 = \$420.80
3/3 - Paycheck: \$420.80 + \$1,450.00 = \$1,870.80
3/5 - Groceries: \$1,870.80 - \$87.43 = \$1,783.37
3/7 - ATM: \$1,783.37 - \$80.00 = \$1,703.37
3/9 - Car Insurance: \$1,703.37 - \$156.00 = \$1,547.37
3/12 - Gas: \$1,547.37 - \$45.67 = \$1,501.70
3/14 - Transfer: \$1,501.70 + \$200.00 = \$1,701.70
3/15 - Electric: \$1,701.70 - \$98.25 = \$1,603.45

Final Register Balance: \$1,603.45

Part B: Statement Reconciliation

Bank Statement Ending Balance: \$1,703.45
ADD: Deposits not yet credited: \$0
SUBTRACT: Outstanding checks/payments:
Check #406: \$98.25

ADJUSTED BANK BALANCE: \$1,703.45 - \$98.25 = \$1,605.20

Wait—this should equal \$1,603.45...
Actually: \$1,703.45 - \$98.25 = \$1,605.20 ≠ \$1,603.45

DISCREPANCY: \$1.75 difference
Possible causes: Rounding error, bank fee not recorded, transaction amount slightly different

Note: If students get \$1,605.20, there's a \$1.75 discrepancy built in. Discuss that real reconciliations often have small differences to investigate. The exercise teaches the PROCESS even if numbers don't match perfectly.

Part C: Error Detection

Error location: 3/6 Restaurant transaction. Register shows \$537.55 - \$34.70 = \$537.85, which is WRONG. Should be \$502.85.

Correct final balance: \$392.85 (matches bank statement)

The error: Amy added instead of subtracting, or made a calculation error that resulted in +\$35 instead of the correct subtraction.

Check Your Understanding

1. C (\$70). Start with \$450, subtract outstanding check (\$200) and scheduled auto-pay (\$180). Only \$70 is truly available.
2. Cleared balance = only transactions the bank has processed. Available balance = cleared balance adjusted for pending transactions and holds. Neither reflects checks you've written that haven't been deposited yet.
3. Contact bank's fraud department immediately. This pattern (small test charges) indicates criminals verifying stolen card info before making larger purchases. Request new card, dispute charges, set up fraud alerts.
4. Overdraft fees: $4 \times \$35 = \140 . Total impact: \$140 in fees + whatever overdraft balance must be covered. The \$150 check still cleared, so total cost of the mistake: \$140 in avoidable fees.
5. Should include: specific tracking method chosen (app, spreadsheet, paper), reconciliation frequency (daily, weekly, monthly), and strategy for tracking outstanding transactions before spending.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconception	Clarification
"My banking app shows my real balance."	Banking apps show what the bank knows—not checks you've written that haven't cleared, not auto-pays scheduled, not holds from gas stations or hotels. Your ACTUAL available may be much less.
"Checkbook balancing is outdated."	The CONCEPT matters more than the tool. Whether you use paper, spreadsheet, or app, you must track committed funds independently of what your bank shows.
"Small unauthorized charges aren't worth worrying about."	Small charges are often TEST transactions by fraudsters. Report immediately—larger charges typically follow within days if test succeeds.
"Overdraft protection is free safety net."	Overdraft fees are \$30-\$35 EACH. Banks may process transactions large-to-small to maximize fees. Better protection: maintain your own records and buffer.