

Giving advice about consumer financial protection

Students put their developing understanding of fraud and identity theft to use as they play the role of a consumer affairs advice columnist responding to letters from readers.

Learning goals

Big idea

Fraud and identity theft hurt millions of Americans every year.

Essential questions

- How can I avoid fraud and protect my financial identity?
- How do I report fraud and identity theft?

Objectives

- Understand different types of fraud and identity theft
- Discover how to report fraud and identity theft

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: High school (9-12)

Age range: 13-19

Topic: Protect (Managing risk, Preventing fraud and identity theft)

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

Teaching strategy: Blended learning, Cooperative learning, Simulation

Bloom's Taxonomy level: Understand, Analyze, Create

Activity duration: 45-60 minutes

National Standards for Personal Financial Education, 2021

Managing credit: 12-12

Managing risk: 8-1, 8-7, 12-11

Spending: 12-8, 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

- Assume the role of a consumer affairs advice columnist.
- Write advice to people who are victims of fraud or identity theft.

Preparing for this activity

- While it's not necessary, completing the "Defining fraud and identity theft" or "Reporting fraud or identity theft to authorities" activities first may make this one more meaningful.
- Print copies of all student materials, or prepare for students to access them electronically.
- Obtain computers or tablets with Internet access for students so they can do research or provide them with printed versions of research materials.

What you'll need

THIS TEACHER GUIDE

- Giving advice about consumer financial protection (guide)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_giving-advice-consumer-protection_guide.pdf](#)

STUDENT MATERIALS

- Giving advice about consumer financial protection (worksheet)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_giving-advice-consumer-protection_worksheet.pdf](#)
- Computers or tablets with Internet access

Exploring key financial concepts

Fraud is an illegal act that occurs when people try to trick you out of your personal information and your money. Identity theft is when someone uses your personal information – such as your name, Social Security number, or credit card number – without your permission. Millions of Americans are victims of fraud or identity theft each year. No matter where you live or how old you are, you may someday be affected by these crimes. Identity theft can happen over the phone by answering personal questions

TIP

Because terms and laws related to fraud and identity theft change, students should be encouraged to always look for the most up-to-date information.

or online by clicking suspicious links, answering social media quizzes that ask for personal information, or opening emails from unknown sources on your computer or phone. Companies or businesses that are genuine usually have passcodes or other methods to protect your personal information. For example, many companies now use something called two-factor authentication. This requires people to use two methods to sign into an account to make it harder for criminals to access the account. Criminals can also steal your personal information from companies or businesses. Knowing how to recognize fraud and identity theft can help you protect your money.

Teaching this activity

Whole-class introduction

- Ask students to share if they or someone they know has received a spam email or text message.
 - Ask volunteers to share whether the message was an attempt at fraud or just junk.
- Ask students to share what they think people who send fraudulent messages are trying to do.
- Read the “Exploring key financial concepts” section to students.
- Be sure students understand key vocabulary:
 - **Data breach:** The unauthorized movement or disclosure of sensitive information to a party, usually outside the organization, that is not authorized to have or see the information. Someone who gets the data might use it for identity theft.
 - **Fraud:** An illegal act that occurs when people try to trick you out of your personal information and your money.
 - **Identity theft:** Using your personal information – such as your name, Social Security number, or credit card number – without your permission.
 - **Scam:** A dishonest trick used to cheat somebody out of something important, like money. Scams can happen in person, through social media, or by phone, email, postal mail, or text.
 - **Tax-related identity theft:** When someone steals your Social Security number to file a tax return claiming a fraudulent refund; may also be called tax-filing-related identity theft.

TIP

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

Individual or group work

- Students can work individually or in pairs on this activity.
- Tell students that they'll pretend to be a consumer affairs advice columnist and answer questions from readers.
- Distribute the "Giving advice about consumer financial protection" worksheet.
- Give each student or pair a computer or tablet with Internet access.
- For each question, students should write advice for the reader, using complete sentences and a professional tone and making sure the advice is clear.

Wrap-up

- For each question, ask a volunteer to share their response.
 - Invite other students to share any alternative responses.
 - You can use the answer guide to address any errors.
 - Ask the class to look for themes in the responses, noting similarities and differences.
- If time allows, ask students to share something they learned about how to protect their own financial identity and report crimes when they occur.

Suggested next steps

Consider searching for other CFPB activities that address the topic of protection, including managing risk and preventing fraud and identity theft. Suggested activities include "Speaking publicly about consumer rights" and "Creating a PSA about credit cards".

Measuring student learning

Students' answers on their worksheets and during discussion can give you a sense of their understanding.

This answer guide provides possible answers for the "Giving advice about consumer financial protection" worksheet. **Keep in mind that students' answers may vary.** The important thing is for students to have reasonable justification for their answers.

Answer guide

Question	Possible advice and some possible guidance sources
1. I found out that my identity was stolen. Who do I call to report this? Where do I even begin?	The person should contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). (Possible source: https://www.identitytheft.gov/)
2. I've just received my most recent credit card statement and there are several charges I didn't make. I'm overwhelmed and don't know who to contact. Should I write a letter to my credit card company, or should I just pay the fraudulent charges and move on?	The person should contact their credit card company immediately. (Possible source: https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/how-do-i-dispute-a-charge-on-my-credit-card-bill-en-61/)
3. When I went to file my taxes online, the system rejected my taxes because someone had already filed in my name. How can this happen? What should I do? Is there an agency I can contact?	The person should contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which will help them with the steps to take in case of fraudulent tax activity done with their identity. (Possible source: https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/taxpayer-guide-to-identity-theft)
4. I just went to the ATM to get money, but the machine showed that I had a negative balance! I looked at my account online, and it seems that someone has been using my bank account to make purchases without my permission. What should I do? Should I try to track down whoever is stealing money from me or just ignore it?	The first step the person should take is to immediately contact their bank and report the situation. (Possible source: https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/bank-accounts/)