

# Learning about coins

Students learn to identify the penny, nickel, dime, quarter, and their values.

## Learning goals

### Big idea

Pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters are all coins, but they have different values.

### Essential questions

- How do you recognize different coins?
- How much is each type of coin worth?

### Objectives

- Identify four types of U.S. coins
- Remember and understand the value of each type of coin

### What students will do

- Learn the name and value of a penny, a nickel, a dime, and a quarter.
- Explore the coins' features.
- Practice comparing the coins' values.

### 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:** Elementary school (K-1)

**Age range:** 5-7

**Topic:** Earn (Becoming an entrepreneur, Getting paid), Save and invest (Banking options), Spend (Buying things)

**School subject:** Math, Physical education or health

**Teaching strategy:** Direct instruction, Cooperative learning

**Bloom's Taxonomy level:** Remember, Understand

**Activity duration:** 45-60 minutes

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**National Standards for Personal Financial Education, 2021**

Earning income: 4-6

Spending: 4-2, 4-6

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 "Exploring ways we use money" activity first may make this one more meaningful.
- Consider displaying the poster, "Learn about coins and dollar bills" before doing this activity.
  - You can order the poster for free here:  
<https://pueblo.gpo.gov/CFPBPub/CFPBPubs.php?PubID=13473>.
- Print a copy of the "Common U.S. coins" page in this guide for each student and cut apart the coin slips so that each student will have a set.
  - You also can have the students cut apart the slips.
- Print a copy of the "Common U.S. coins" page for yourself or access it electronically.

### What you'll need

#### THIS TEACHER GUIDE

- Learning about coins (guide)  
[cfpb\\_building\\_block\\_activities\\_learning-about-coins\\_guide.pdf](cfpb_building_block_activities_learning-about-coins_guide.pdf)
- "Common U.S. coins" page (in this guide)

#### STUDENT MATERIALS

- Coin slips from the "Common U.S. coins" page (in this guide)
- Scissors (optional)

## Exploring key financial concepts

Coins are small metal discs that we use as money. We can pay for things using coins. Each coin has a different name and a different value. That means that different coins are worth different amounts of money. For example:

- A penny is worth one cent.
- A nickel is worth five cents.
- A dime is worth 10 cents.
- A quarter is worth 25 cents.

It's important to know that a coin's size doesn't always mean it's worth more or less than other coins. For example, a penny and a nickel are bigger than a dime. But they are worth less than a dime.

Knowing the different values of coins can help you when you are buying things or when you are getting paid by someone.

## Teaching this activity

### Whole-class introduction

- Tell students that they'll learn about coins.
- Ask students if anyone knows what coins are and what they're used for.
- Read the "Exploring Key Financial Concepts" section to the students.
- Be sure students understand key vocabulary:
  - **Coin:** A small metal disc that we use as money.
  - **Money:** You can use money to buy goods and services.  
Money looks different in different places around the world.

#### TIP

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Visit CFPB's financial education glossary at [consumerfinance.gov/financial-education-glossary/](https://consumerfinance.gov/financial-education-glossary/).

### Individual and group work

- Give each student a set of coin slips from the "Common U.S. coins" page in this guide. Each set should include slips for a penny, a nickel, a dime, and a quarter.
- Direct students to the penny slip and tell them that a penny is worth one cent.
- Explain that every coin has a front where a face usually appears. That side is called "heads."
- Explain that every coin has a back that has a different picture. That side is called "tails."
- Ask students to look at the front and back of the penny and share some things they see on each side.
- Repeat the process with the nickel, dime, and quarter so students become familiar with each coin's value and appearance.
  - If you feel a review is needed, you can call out each coin's name and ask students to hold up the slip showing that coin.

- Tell students that they'll practice putting the coins in order based on their size.
  - Ask students to hold up the slip showing the smallest coin.
  - Repeat the process with the next three coins in order of their size.
- Tell students they'll practice putting the coins in order based on their value.
  - Ask students to hold up the slip showing the coin that's worth the least.
  - Repeat the process with the next three coins in order of their value.
- Tell students that they'll try a fun way to put the coins in order.
  - Collect all the coin slips.
  - Divide the class into groups of four.
  - Give the students in each group a different coin slip.
  - Ask each group to work together to line up in order based on the value of each student's coin slip.
  - Once the groups are done, walk from group to group and ask the class whether the group arranged themselves correctly. If they didn't, ask the class how the group should change their order.

## Wrap-up

If there's time, ask students if they could only have one of the coins which one would they want and why.

## Suggested next steps

Consider searching for other CFPB activities that address the topics of earning, including becoming and entrepreneur or getting paid; saving and investing, including banking options; or spending, including buying things. Suggested activities include "Understanding the value of money" and "Knowing what costs us money."

To extend the learning, consider sharing the U.S. Mint's H.I.P. Pocket Change site with students at <https://www.usmint.gov/learn/kids/coins> or exploring the U.S. Currency Education Program's Currency Academy at <https://www.uscurrency.gov/educational-materials/classrooms/currency-academy>.

## Measuring student learning

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

**Keep in mind that students' answers may vary.** The important thing is for students to have reasonable justification for their answers.

# Common U.S. coins

Print a copy of this page for each student. Cut apart the coin slips and give each student a set that includes a penny, a nickel, a dime, and a quarter.



Penny

Front



Back



Value

1 cent  
1¢

Nickel

Front



Back



Value

5 cents  
5¢

Dime

Front



Back



Value

10 cents  
10¢

Quarter

Front



Back



Value

25 cents  
25¢