

GRADES
K-2

FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS™ · LESSON 1 OF 40

Money Is a Tool

What money is, where it comes from, and the four things we do with it.

🕒 30–35 minutes 👥 Whole class, pairs and small groups ☑️ About 10 minutes to prep

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Money Is a Tool

Lesson 1 of the K-2 year · Students find out what money is and where it comes from, then sort six short stories about the Crew into Earn, Spend, Save and Give.

 LEARNING TARGET	I can tell someone what money is and one way people get it. Write it on the board. Read it aloud together at the start and again at the end.	
 MATERIALS	☐ Chart paper for a "What Is Money?" anchor chart ☐ A red apple and a blue crayon (or the pictures on p. 10)	☐ 1 real penny per student, or a printed coin
 COPIES & PREP	☐ Crew Story Cards, 1 per pair (p. 6) ☐ Earn / Spend / Save / Give cards, 1 set per pair (p. 7)	☐ Guided notes half-sheets (p. 8) ☐ Exit tickets (p. 9)
	About 10 minutes to prep	
 VOCABULARY	money special coins and paper we use to get things tool something that helps us do a job earn to get money by doing work trade giving one thing to get something else	
 CONNECTS TO	Math: coins and counting · Social studies: community helpers and jobs · Social-emotional: sharing and helping	

Lesson flow

Warm-Up	The Apple Problem	5 min
I Do	What money is and where it comes from	8 min
We Do	The Crew Uses Money: sort the stories, in pairs	10 min
You Do	Talk it over + guided notes	5 min
Check	Milo's closing question	3-4 min

Warm-Up

5 minutes · The Apple Problem

As students settle, hold up a real apple (or the picture on p. 10) and a blue crayon. Say it in a warm, curious voice:

Teacher Talk

Good morning, friends. I have a question and I need your help. I really, really want this apple. But all I have is this blue crayon. Can I get the apple with the crayon?

Let students respond naturally. Some will say yes: encourage those ideas. Some will say no: ask why not.

Teacher Talk

A long, long time ago, people did trade things like this. If I had something you needed and you had something I needed, we'd swap. But what if you didn't need a crayon? What if nobody wanted what I had? That made trading really, really hard.

Pause. Then hold up a penny.

Teacher Talk

So people came up with something amazing. They made a special kind of tool, something everybody agreed was worth something. They called it money. And today, we're going to find out what money really is and where it comes from.



Display Milo. "Milo the owl is going to explore with us today. Milo's first question is: *What do YOU think money is?* Turn to the person next to you and tell them your idea. You have 30 seconds."

Take 2–3 responses. Write the word **MONEY** large on the anchor chart.

 **Tip** Every paragraph here is meant to be spoken, not read silently. Build the anchor chart while you talk.

What is money?

Money is a tool. A hammer is a tool: it helps you pound a nail. A spoon is a tool: it helps you eat your soup. Money is a tool too. But money's job is different. Money helps us get things we need and want.

A long time ago, before money existed, people traded. A farmer might trade ten apples for a pair of shoes. But what if the shoemaker didn't want apples? Then nobody got anything. It was a mess.

So people invented money. They made coins, little metal circles with pictures on them. Later they made paper bills. Everybody agreed: these coins and bills are worth something.

Here's the important part: **money has value because we all agree it does**. A penny is just a little piece of metal. But everyone in our country agrees it's worth one cent. That agreement is what makes money work.

Where does money come from?

Most people get money by working. When you do a job, someone pays you. That payment is called **earning**. Point to each Crew card as you say it:

"Miller's dad fixes cars. He works hard, and his boss pays him money. That's earning."

"Naiya's grandmother makes and sells beautiful quilts. People pay her for them. That's earning too."

"Sai's mom works at a hospital taking care of people. She earns money there every week."

The four things we do with money

Add each one to the anchor chart with a quick drawing (the label cards on p. 7 can be posted instead):



EARN

get money by doing work



SPEND

use money to buy things



SAVE

keep money to use later



GIVE

share money to help others

Guided notes: hand out the half-sheet (p. 8). K and Grade 1 draw someone doing a job that earns money; Grade 2 completes the sentence.

We Do

10 minutes · The Crew Uses Money

Each pair gets one Crew Story Card (p. 6) and a set of the four label cards (p. 7). Or project the cards for the whole class.

1. Read the story aloud (Grade 2 may read it to each other).
2. Each pair holds up the label card they think matches: EARN, SPEND, SAVE or GIVE.
3. Discuss as a class. Ask: "How did you know?"
4. Rotate the cards so each pair hears at least 2–3 stories.

Teacher Talk

These are the Crew. They're just like you: kids who are learning about money too. Miller, Sai, Ava, Macon, Naiya and Brooke-Lynn are going to be with us all year. By the end of our lessons, you'll know exactly what they do with their money, and you'll know what you want to do with yours.

You Do

5 minutes · talk it over

1. "Before today, what did you think money was?"
Listen for: coins, paper, dollars, something you need to buy things. Accept all. Add: "And today we learned it's also a tool. Money's job is to help us trade for things we need."
2. "How do most people get money?"
Listen for: working, earning. If students say "from my mom" or "my birthday," celebrate it and gently redirect: "Yes! And how did your mom get it? She worked for it. That's earning."
3. Partners: "Tell your partner about someone in your family who earns money. What job do they do?"
Any job counts. Celebrate every kind of work; don't rank jobs as better or worse.

Check for Understanding

3–4 minutes



Milo wants to know: "What is ONE thing you can do with money? Show me with your fingers: 1 for EARN, 2 for SPEND, 3 for SAVE, 4 for GIVE!"

K: fingers only; scan the room. **Grade 1:** circle and draw on the exit ticket. **Grade 2:** circle and write the sentence (p. 9).

Differentiation

meeting every learner

Needs support

Use only two label cards at first (EARN and SPEND), then add SAVE and GIVE. Read every story aloud and point to the picture.

English learners

The four words translate cleanly: write them in students' home languages beside the English on the anchor chart. The pictures carry the meaning.

Ready for more

"What would happen if money didn't exist? Write or draw your answer." Or: make up a fifth Crew story and let the class sort it.

Extend & Adapt

if you have more time, or a different room

Extend it

- **My Money Museum** (p. 10): students draw three things for a pretend museum about money: old coins, a cash register, a piggy bank.
- **Read aloud:** *Curious George Saves His Pennies* or *The Berenstain Bears' Trouble with Money* pair well with this lesson.

After-school, clubs and mixed ages

Runs in 30 minutes as written. The apple-and-crayon hook needs no printing: any two objects will do. No printer? Read each story aloud and have students vote with thumbs, or by standing on the EARN side or the SPEND / SAVE / GIVE side of the room. With mixed ages (K–3), the older student reads the card and the younger one holds up the answer.

Answer key • Crew Story Cards

Miller: **EARN** • Sai: **SAVE** • Ava: **SPEND** • Macon: **GIVE** • Naiya: **EARN** • Brooke-Lynn: **SPEND**

Where this goes next

This is Lesson 1 of a connected K–2 year: 40 lessons across four units. See Financial Foundations™ at wealthwisekids.org/curriculum.

The Crew Uses Money • Story Cards ✂ Cut on the dashed lines • one card per pair

Miller



Miller helped his neighbor rake leaves. His neighbor gave him \$2.00.

EARN • SPEND • SAVE • GIVE?

Sai



Sai put \$1.00 in a jar to keep for later. He wants a book.

EARN • SPEND • SAVE • GIVE?

Ava



Ava bought a juice box at the school store for 75 cents.

EARN • SPEND • SAVE • GIVE?

Macon



Macon put coins in the donation jar at the community center to help families who need food.

EARN • SPEND • SAVE • GIVE?

Naiya



Naiya helped fold laundry for her auntie and got \$1.50.

EARN • SPEND • SAVE • GIVE?

Brooke-Lynn



Brooke-Lynn used birthday money to buy a new coloring book.

EARN • SPEND • SAVE • GIVE?



EARN

get money by doing work



SPEND

use money to buy things



SAVE

keep money to use later



GIVE

share money to help others

Someone Who Earns

Name _____

Draw a picture of someone doing a job that earns money.



This person is a _____



GRADE 2

What Is Money?

Name _____

Finish the sentence.

Money is a _____

that helps us _____

Word bank: **tool** · **get things we need** · **earn** · **trade**

Milo's Question

Name _____

What is ONE thing you can do with money? **Circle it.** Then draw it.**EARN****SPEND****SAVE****GIVE****Milo's Question**

Name _____

What is ONE thing you can do with money? **Circle it.****EARN****SPEND****SAVE****GIVE**

One thing money can do is _____

Your class is opening a museum about money! Draw three things you would put on display. Write or tell what each one is.



This is _____



This is _____



This is _____

Hook pictures, if you don't have the real thing:





Dear Family,

A note from your child's class

Today your child started learning about money. Our big idea: **money is a tool**, something people use to get what they need and want.

We learned that long ago, people traded things directly (like apples for shoes), but that was hard. So communities created money: coins and bills that everyone agrees have value. We also learned that most people get money by **working and earning** it.

And we met the **four things we do with money**: Earn, Spend, Save and Give.

Try this in the car or at the store:

“Can you tell me one thing you learned about money today? What is money used for?”

A 5-minute game (no materials needed): take turns naming jobs. “I name a job, you tell me if that person earns money: yes or no.” Start with easy ones (doctor, teacher, bus driver), then get creative (artist, gardener, chef). The goal: your child connects that *all kinds of work* lead to earning, and that work is honorable.

Thank you for being a partner in your child's learning.

Milo Peregrine

and the WealthWise Kids™ Team



Milo's footprint



EARN

get money by doing work



SPEND

use money to buy things



SAVE

keep money to use later



GIVE

share money to help others

Free for families: read WealthWise Kids Adventures™ Book One together at adventures.wealthwisekids.org.