

# Teaching middle school students

---

## Financial habits and norms

Financial habits and norms are values, standards, routine practices, and rules of thumb around money. These help people navigate their day-to-day financial lives.

### Watch for a student to demonstrate:

- **Positive money attitudes** – understands the value of savings, frugality, planning, and self-control
- **Savings planning** – explains his or her own values for when, and how to save money
- **Spending planning** – explains his or her own values for when and how to spend money
- **Math skills** – applies math concepts beyond simple addition and subtraction

### To develop these skills you can:

- Define positive habits, such as saving for short-term and long-term goals and needs
- Discuss values that support healthy saving and spending plans
- Share shortcuts and rules of thumb and identify the money principles at work
- Guide students into setting realistic goals, whatever their money situation
- Encourage students to keep their saving and spending plans visible and handy
- Build applied math skills through hands-on exercises

## Financial knowledge and decision-making skills

Financial knowledge and decision-making skills are exhibited by deliberate actions, like financial planning, research, and intentional decisions.

### Watch for a student to demonstrate:

- **Aligned decision-making** – makes spending and saving choices that are consistent with his or her goals and values
- **Self-confidence** – approaches basic money tasks without hesitation
- **Research skills** – seeks financial information from community, media, peers, and school
- **Ability to meet goals** – can identify a time he or she successfully managed money or another resource

### To develop these skills you can:

- Develop students' ability to compare and contrast, so they can analyze their options
- Make lessons relevant to students' lives and choices
- Provide opportunities for repeated practice
- Introduce students to trustworthy sources of financial information
- Expose students to your state standards or common financial literacy standards

# Executive function

Strong executive function makes it easier to plan, focus attention, remember details, and juggle multiple tasks.

## Watch for a student to demonstrate:

- **Impulse control** – thinks before acting
- **Strong working memory** – remembers key information
- **Flexible thinking** – can understand others' point of view
- **Planning and prioritizing** – decides on a goal and how to meet that goal
- **Task initiation** – knows how to start on a project
- **Responding and adjusting** – ability to incorporate feedback into work or activities

## To develop these skills you can:

- Show students different methods to solve a problem
- Encourage regular note-taking
- Show students how to use a mind map as a project organizer
- Use rubrics that describe what a successful assignment looks like
- Break larger assignments into smaller chunks with a pacing guide that builds to the final assignment
- Ask students to show how they arrived at an answer, to see if alternate methods have merit

Youth financial capability skills grow over time and are key to achieving adult financial well-being. Findings from CFPB's research suggest that the knowledge, skills, and behaviors associated with adult financial capability stem from three interconnected building blocks developed in youth. Children and youth need all three of the interconnected building blocks to achieve financial capability.

Learn more about each of the building blocks at [consumerfinance.gov/youth-financial-education](https://consumerfinance.gov/youth-financial-education).

