

The Budget Game

Teachers' guide



What is The Budget Game?

The Budget Game is a fun, easy to play simulation of how a small family needs to balance their finances over one or more months.

Teams first calculate how much spending power they have for the month after paying for their regular costs and choosing the lifestyle they wish to enjoy.

They then take turns to move around the board, responding to and adjusting for a range of financial transactions and events. Students need to avoid unauthorised or unmanageable debt and stay in control of their finances.

The Budget Game raises a wide range of important questions about managing your finances, from how the lifestyle you choose commits you to the fixed and variable costs you must pay each month, to how you make financial choices or respond to unexpected events.

Each choice or event forces students to think about what money means to them and what influences their approach to spending and borrowing.

To help you discuss these issues, every item or event has associated talking points for you to use with your students. These are open-ended questions to stimulate discussion and help students become more self-aware about their attitudes to money.

How will my students benefit?

Playing The Budget Game helps students:

- Explore the kinds of fixed, variable and discretionary costs associated with running a household
- Develop their ability to manage a budget
- Discuss and make financial decisions, weighing the costs and benefits
- Explore the impact of making different borrowing (credit) decisions
- Understand a bank statement

What financial issues does the game cover?

Playing The Budget Game helps students explore:

- Fixed, variable and discretionary household costs
- Bank statements
- Making financial decisions
- Unexpected events
- Choosing and then paying for different levels of 'lifestyle'
- Different kinds of borrowing (credit)
- Savings (optional)
- Personal responsibility and financial ethics
- Influences on spending and borrowing

How will the game help my students develop their wider skills?

As they play The Budget Game students will need to use the following skills:

- Numeracy
- Literacy
- Decision-making
- Communication

Rules

Please refer to the separate PDF document How to play the Budget Game for a full explanation of the rules.

Preparation

- You will need to first print out and assemble the board – make sure you set this to print to A3 and that it is printed single-sided
- The score sheets will also need to be printed single-sided, unless you want to use the other side for a future game and recycle the paper
- Each group will need one six-sided die
- Print the 'Choice', 'Debit', 'Credit' and 'Lifeline' cards single-sided
- Students can also create their own cards – they will need to do this if the game is going to be played over more than one 'month', to provide additional choices and challenges
- Students should play in small teams of 2 – 3 individuals
- Each Game Board is suitable for groups of 2 – 4 teams
- Students will need to cut out the cards and counters and tape the Game Board together
- Students may require calculators

What prior learning do students need?

Each team's Score Card is laid out like a simple bank statement and students will need to understand the conventions for how a bank balance is represented and how to write down money that leaves or enters the account. The Rules summarise this for students:

Credits are **paid in** to your account and add to your balance.

Debits are **paid out** from your account and reduce your balance.

An account with money in it is 'in credit' and has a CR after the balance.

An account that is overdrawn is 'in debit' and has a DR after the balance.

Review these four points with students so they can accurately adjust and show their bank balance after each transaction or event. You may wish to demonstrate each example.

How can I deliver The Budget Game?

You can deliver The Budget Game over one or two 50-minute lessons.

The Rules cover how students can play for a single 'month' (one circuit around the board) or several 'months' (for example, three circuits around the board). If playing the game over several 'months', additional cards will need to be created to provide greater choice and challenges.

1. Introduce The Budget Game
2. Review the Rules
3. Ask groups to play for a single 'month' and calculate their closing balances.
4. Ask groups to listen briefly to each team's justification of its choices (e.g. their spending decisions and whether they opted to use a Lifeline) and select the team that in their opinion showed the best financial decision-making.
5. Ask groups to select the cards they used during the game and share these one at a time as a class.
6. For each card that a team shares, use the talking points below to stimulate a discussion, as time permits, about that financial issue or choice. (You may wish to select the most important points, to manage your time or to focus on one or more specific issues, such as forms of borrowing or dealing with unexpected events.)
7. As a plenary, ask students to share the most important lesson they have learned by playing The Budget Game.

Longer games

Play the game as above, but for two or three 'months' (two or three circuits around the board. (Review how the rules explain how to transfer one month's closing balance to the opening balance of the next month.)

You will be able to spend more time discussing each talking point you choose to explore.

With more time, you may also wish to include savings with the game:

1. Ask students to explain the importance of saving for the future, for specific costs or future events, to create a 'rainy day' fund or even to fund retirement.
2. Invite teams to choose to save a set amount at the start of each month if they wish. Teams should write this as the first transaction on their Score Cards, remembering that this will be debited from (paid out of) their current account (and into another savings account).
3. Teams can choose to 'dip into' their savings instead of choosing a Lifeline, if their account balance gets close to zero.
 - a. Teams playing for one month can only use up to the value of that month's savings. They should add the amount they choose to use as a credit to their account balance.

- b. Teams playing for more than one month can use up to the value of the savings they have contributed so far in the game (i.e. in month three the team could use up to three months' savings to help them). Again, students should add the amount they choose to use as a credit to their account balance.
4. At the end of the game students should also add up the total savings they are left with, ensuring they deduct any savings they have used to ensure their account stays in credit.

How can I use the talking points?

The talking points help your students explore each financial issue or event included in the game. Each one is an open-ended question. Talking points can help students:

- Understand the relevance of the issue or event to their own present or future lives
- Consider an issue from different angles
- Identify their views and influences
- Consider risk and the consequences of financial choices
- Identify where they need to find information to help them make informed choices in their real lives

Small group discussion

1. Provide a copy of the table of talking points to each group of teams.
2. Students can discuss each event or issue as they occur during the game, for example when making initial choices or after picking up and responding to each Credit, Debit, Choice or Lifeline.
3. Alternatively, students can use the descriptions they write on their Score Cards to remind them of the issues they faced, retrieve the relevant cards and discuss some or all of these at the end of the game as a way to help choose the winning team.

Whole-class discussion

1. Ask each team to use the descriptions they wrote on their Score Cards to remind them of the events or issues they faced, retrieve the relevant cards and share these as a class.
2. Make a note of each event or issue on your board.
3. Select which ones you want to discuss as a class.
4. Read out the relevant talking point, and ask students to discuss in their teams or groups and then share ideas, or discuss as a whole class.

Talking points

Opening Balance and Net Income

Opening balance	What could you do with any money left over at the end of the month (the opening balance for the next month)? (i.e. where else could you put this money?)
Net income	What does 'net' mean? What deductions do you need to remember you will lose from your total pay? (16–19 only)

Fixed costs

Mortgage	What is a mortgage? Where do you get a mortgage from? How long can a mortgage take to pay off? What can happen if you can't pay your mortgage? What factors influence how much you can borrow?
Council Tax	What does council tax pay for? Can you get any reduction in or help with your council tax (and how can you find out)?
Energy bills	How can you find the best deal for your energy? How could you reduce your energy bills and save money in the long term? What can happen if you can't pay your energy bills?
Water bills	What two important things do your water bills pay for? Can you shop around for your water supplier, like you can for energy? What happens if you can't pay your water bills?
Health insurance and pension	Does everyone need to have health insurance? What's a pension for? How are pensions said to be 'tax efficient' ways to save? Must your employer help you save into a pension?

Choices (Score Card)

Family car	What factors influence a family's choice of car? What different ways are there to pay for or finance a car? How can you get the best deal on car insurance? How can you lower your car insurance costs? Can cheaper cover end up being more expensive?
Holiday instalments	Do we all need a holiday? How can you get better deals on holiday packages? What factors influence the holidays we choose? Should we borrow to pay for holidays?
Monthly food shop	What factors influence where your family shops for food, what it buys and what brands you buy? What are some easy ways to save money on food? How can we save money by wasting less food?
Satellite TV	Is this a need or a want? Do we really watch all the channels we pay for?

Breakdown cover	Is breakdown cover always needed for a car? Can you buy different levels of cover?
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Debits

Vet's fees	Should every pet owner take out insurance? What are the risks – and costs – if you don't have insurance? Do you still have to pay some costs if you do have insurance?
Parking fine	How can a driver avoid getting a parking fine?
Insufficient funds	How can you ensure you have enough money in your account to cover your direct debits and standing orders? Can you negotiate with your bank over any fines for when you're unable to pay?
Washing machine repair	Is home appliance insurance a good idea?
Car breakdown	Can cheaper cover end up being more expensive?
Emergency dentist	How can you ensure you're prepared for emergency costs like this? Are regular dental check-ups worth the money? Can you get free or cheap dental care? Is dental insurance a good idea? Do private dentists let you spread the cost of regular check-ups?
Cinema	Are cinemas good value for money? How can you reduce the cost of a visit to the cinema?
Energy price increase	How can you make sure you're getting the cheapest deals for your electricity and gas?
Locksmith	How can you ensure you're prepared for emergency costs like this?
MOT failure	How can you ensure you're prepared for emergency costs like this? What can you do to keep your car in good condition?
Haircut	What's too much to pay for a haircut? Are there ways to save money on haircuts?
Wedding gift	Should people have gift lists? Do people feel under pressure to give expensive wedding gifts?
Family reunion	Can people feel under pressure to contribute to shared gifts? What could you say if you don't feel you can contribute as much as others?
Gym membership	What influences the gym someone goes to? Can you save on gym fees? Are there cheaper ways to stay fit and healthy?

Credit

Goodwill from bank	Might a bank refund fees once, or many times?
Birthday	What could you do with birthday money? What influences what YOU do with birthday money?
Inheritance	What might be some good ways to spend or save one-off income like this?

Crossword win	Is income like this likely to happen often? Should you view income like this as a treat to enjoy?
Scratch card win	Is income like this likely to happen often? Do scratch card players really win in the long run? Is the fun of taking part worth the cost?
Cancel gym membership	Are there cheaper ways to stay fit and healthy?
eBay sales	What other ways are there to make money out of things you no longer need? What websites can help you do this?
Cash award	Is income like this likely to happen often? Should you view income like this as a treat to enjoy?
Shoe refund	What are your rights when returning goods? Where can you get advice on your consumer rights? What do you need to keep so you can enforce your rights if you need to?
Leftover dollars	What's the best thing to do with money left over after a holiday? Could you save towards the next holiday?
Restaurant work	What influenced your choice here? Are live concerts good value? How can you save money on concerts and other live events?
Gas supplier	How can you make sure you're getting the cheapest deals for your electricity and gas?

Choices

Speed camera	What are the pros and cons of each option? Might you be given this option more than once?
Competition	Is the chance of winning worth the risk of losing your entry fee? How can you weigh up whether the risk is worth it?
London Marathon sponsorship	What influences how much you sponsor someone? Is it OK to say no to sponsoring someone for a good cause?
X Factor final tickets	Does this represent good value for three people? What influences your ideas about value for money here?
Promotion celebration	Are there cheaper ways to celebrate? Do you need to celebrate like this? What could you say if you feel pressured to spend more than you want to?
School outing	What might your daughter gain from the outing? Will she be under pressure to go with her friends?
Mobile phone	What's the right choice – PAYG or contract? Does it matter what type of phone you have? What's a sensible limit for a teenager's phone use each month?
Electrician's quote	How can you ensure you're prepared for emergency costs like this? Should you always check that a quote includes VAT? What's the difference between a quote and an estimate?

Boiler breakdown	Is home appliance insurance a good idea? Is it worth paying for yearly maintenance?
Overtime v gig	What would matter more to you? How long would you have to work to afford a £30 ticket?
Casino night	What are your views on gambling? What is your reaction to the risk and reward presented here? What balance of risk v reward would make you want to play? Who always wins in the end?
Holiday clothes	Do you need new clothes for a holiday? What factors influence your clothes buying habits? What would be the right budget for you?
Holiday upgrade	Is this a good offer for you? How can you judge the true value of a special offer?
Parents' anniversary	What do you think is the right amount to spend on an occasion like this? What would you want people to spend on you?
Flood protection	What are the potential costs if you don't take this? What's the likelihood of damage? How could you find out about your flood risk and how to protect yourself?

Lifelines

Credit card	What are the benefits of using a credit card? What are the risks? How can you work out how much borrowing will cost you? How can you find the card that's right for you?
Overdraft	What are the benefits of an overdraft? Should an overdraft be a short-term solution, or a longer-term one?
Payday loan	Why do payday loans look appealing? How can you work out the real cost of a payday loan? Are there cheaper or better alternatives?
Family loan	When might a family loan be a good idea? Should you pay interest? What are the risks, especially if you don't repay on time?
Friends' loan	When might a loan from a friend be a good idea? Should you pay interest? What are the risks, especially if you don't repay on time?

Savings

Monthly savings	How can regular savings help? How can you make sure you save each month? What are your feelings towards saving up instead of borrowing?
Dipping into savings	When might this be OK, and when might it be not OK? How much should you put aside for a 'rainy day'?
Saving for the future	What future events could you save for now? What might you need to save for in the future? How can you find the right places to put your savings?

Talking point for ticket scams

Tickets to big entertainment and sporting events sell out very quickly, which is very disappointing when you've really been looking forward to the big day. This can make it very tempting to buy them from sources other than official websites. However, one in ten people in the UK have been victims of a ticketing scam online.

The Risks

- Fraud resulting from making payments over unsecured web pages
- Bogus ticketing sites – fake websites and email offers for tickets that do not exist
- Bogus posts on fan forums – buying tickets that do not exist
- Not receiving tickets, having transferred money directly into a fraudster's bank account
- Receiving tickets which are fake or do not match the seller's description

Safe Ticket Buying

- Only buy tickets only from the venue box office, promoter, official agent or reputable ticket exchange sites
- Remember that paying by credit card offers greater protection than with other methods in terms of fraud, guarantees and non-delivery
- Before entering payment card details on a website, always check that the link is secure, in three ways:
 - There should be a padlock symbol in the browser window frame, which appears when you attempt to log in or register. Always check that the padlock is not on the page itself... this will probably indicate a fraudulent site
 - The web address should begin with 'https://'. The 's' stands for 'secure'
 - If using the latest version of your browser, the address bar or the name of the site owner will turn green
- Act with care if you do choose to buy tickets from an individual (for example on eBay), never transfer the money directly into their bank account but use a secure payment site such as PayPal, where money is transferred between two electronic accounts

More Information

If you fall victim to a ticket scam, report it to Action Fraud, the UK's national fraud reporting centre by calling **0300 123 20 40** or by visiting [actionfraud.police.uk](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

For more information on how to protect yourself from fraud visit [barclays.co.uk/fraudsmart](https://www.barclays.co.uk/fraudsmart)

Talking points for phishing email

Phishing emails are sent by criminals but are made to look like they come from banks, credit card companies, online shops and auction sites as well as other trusted organisations.

The email usually includes a link that takes you to a website that looks exactly like the real thing (for example, your bank's website) but is actually a fake site. The criminals try to trick you into clicking on the link and entering personal information and banking credentials on the website. The criminals capture the information you type in and use it to steal money from you.

Fake emails often (but not always) display some of the following characteristics:

- The sender's email address is different from the trusted organisation's website address
- The email is sent from a completely different address or a free webmail address

- The email does not use your proper name, but uses a non-specific greeting such as “Dear customer”
- There is a sense of urgency – for example, the threat that unless you act immediately your account may be closed
- A request for personal information such as username, password or bank details
- You weren’t expecting to get an email from the organisation that appears to have sent it
- There are spelling mistakes or bad grammar (often English is not the first language of the criminal)

The emails can look very genuine though, so it’s important to remember that banks will:

- Never email a link that takes you straight to the Online Banking log-in page
- Never email asking you to verify your account details
- Never email to ask for your card details, PIN, authorisation codes or passwords

Act with care when clicking on links from unsolicited emails. Never share any details on a site you’ve reached via a link in an email and don’t send any sensitive information (such as your bank account or bank card details) via email.

If you have fallen for a phishing email and a criminal may have got your information, report it to your bank straight away.

For more information on how to protect yourself from fraud visit barclays.co.uk/fraudsmart

Glossary of Financial terminology

Council tax:

This is a tax which is based on the value of your property, charged to anyone who owns or rents a home and is not in full-time education. This funds local council services.

Credit card:

With a credit card you can buy things now and pay later. You can run up a bill to an agreed limit and pay it off afterwards, usually once a month on a particular payment date.

Debit card

A debit card is like a direct link to your bank account, meaning the funds leave your account immediately when you use the card to pay for something

Mortgage:

A mortgage is when a bank, building society, etc. lends money at interest as a loan to pay off the price of a property

Net:

The total amount remaining in your account after all expenses are deducted

Overdraft:

A deficit created when more money is drawn out than the account holds. Different credit accounts will allow different limits of overdraft.

Pension:

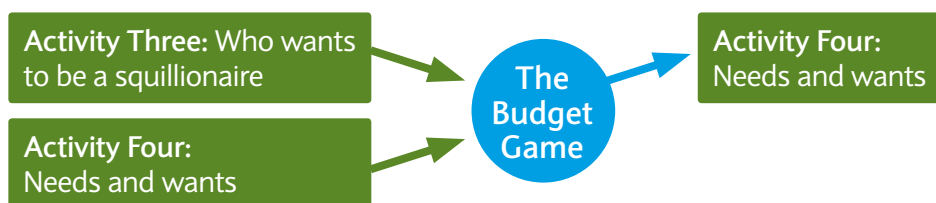
A pension is a long-term savings plan – your regular contributions are invested so that they grow throughout your career and then provide you with an income in retirement. Generally you can access the money in your pension pot from the age of 55.

To find out information, visit moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en

How does the Budget Game link to MoneySkills?

The Budget Game is suitable for students aged 14–16 and 16–19.

Age range: 14–16



Activity Three: Who wants to be a squillionaire can act as a starter or prior learning activity before you deliver the Game.

You can deliver **Activity Four: Needs and wants** before playing the Budget Game, to set the scene and help students focus on their decisions as they play, or deliver Activity Four after playing the Game as a way to help students review and reflect on what influenced their decisions during play.

Age range: 16–19



The Budget Game is best played after **Activity One: Making the most of your money: budgeting**.

You might also like to deliver the Game after **Activity Two: Planning your finances**, as a way to help students further explore their attitude to risk, saving and borrowing as they make decisions during the game. We recommend including the option to include savings as part of the game play (see ‘How can I deliver The Budget Game?’ above).

Age range: 11–14

More able students aged 11–14 will also be able to play and benefit from The Budget Game. The Budget Game is best delivered after students have completed activities One and Two for 11–14 year-olds.

Curriculum Links

For curriculum links for The Budget Game, please refer to the **MoneySkills overview and curriculum links** PDF for teachers.