

MONEY SMART FOR A HEAD START

From Goals to Roles: How a Money-Smart Family Grows



Are you someone who tends to spend or save more often? Does your answer change when asking other people in your household? Differences in financial habits are common. Every person has unique experiences and beliefs with money. There is no right or wrong answer, but what matters is communicating kindly and honestly with your loved ones. Talking about money goes beyond dollar bills. How you handle money can show a deeper meaning of your values & goals. Before you have a conversation with loved ones, ask yourself these questions:

- What are your financial goals? You might be saving up for a 'big ticket' goal such as a vehicle, vacation, or a place to call your own. How do you prioritize these goals?
- What are your values around money? If you believe in generosity, you may choose to donate or spend freely on others. If you value security, you might prioritize building an emergency fund or savings accounts.
- What are your money habits and behaviors? Are you more spontaneous and laid-back, or do you monitor each purchase carefully?

These questions may be answered by what you saw at an early age. Think about your first memories involving money and the lessons you learned. Does this shape how you spend now?

Is this the same message that you wish to share with others in your home and community?

Handling Household Money

Every household is different, but there's no one 'right' way to manage money.

Some families share everything while others separate money into different accounts.

What's most important is that everyone involved feels comfortable and agrees on the plan. Your choices can depend on how much you earn, what your goals are, and how you prefer to spend and save. If your household includes one income, is a blended family, or you are a co-parent, then it's especially

important to talk openly to make sure everyone is considered.

Here are a few ways households manage money:

- Some people put an equal amount into a shared account for bills and savings, and keep the rest for personal spending.
- Others contribute a percentage of their income, such as 50–75% to a shared expense account, which can help when incomes are different.
- Some households combine all income into one account and use the money for everything together.

Try different approaches to see what works best for your family. The goal is to build trust and make sure everyone feels respected when it comes to money.



Starting the Conversation:

Money is one of the top sources of disagreement in households. In fact, nearly 1 in 3 adults with partners say that money causes major conflict in their relationship. These moments can be stressful, but they don't have to be. With small, thoughtful steps, you can turn financial talks into respectful and helpful conversations.

- **Who?** Everyone involved in spending or budgeting should have a voice, including children. Early conversations about money help build stronger financial literacy and confidence.
- **What?** Talk about personal spending and savings. Include "what-if" situations like losing a job, changing careers, or facing unexpected costs.
- **When?** Set aside time for regular conversations, whether it's every week or month. Be sure to talk with one another when there is a bigger purchase, a holiday, or an unexpected expense.

- **Where?** Pick a quiet, comfortable space without distractions. Make it fun! Add a treat or a special activity to help ease any stress.
- **Why?** Regular conversations build trust, prevent misunderstandings, and help create shared goals to work together.
- **How?** Listen to understand, not just to respond. Focus on shared goals and work together to prevent misunderstandings.

References

- <https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/stress-in-america/2014>

To \$um it up

- \$ Set aside time to talk about money regularly and respect everyone's choices.
- \$ Agree on a plan that works for your family and household. It's okay if it looks different than someone else's.
- \$ Have a way to talk through disagreements. They're normal and planning ahead can help you handle them.

Want to Learn More?

- Visit our website for more financial education resources. <https://finances.extension.wisc.edu>
- Contact your local Extension Educator: <https://counties.extension.wisc.edu>
- For help with balancing your monthly spending plan, contact the nonprofit National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) at <https://www.nfcc.org> or 800.388.2227.