







THE PERCENTAGE OF COOKIEMAG.COM POLL RESPONDENTS WHO SAY THEY TALK TO THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT THE FAMILY BUDGET. EIGHTY-FOUR PERCENT SAY THEY GIVE TO CHARITY OR VOLUNTEER WITH THEIR KIDS.

● **WRITE IT OFF >** Tax season is here. To accurately assess the worth of any items you donated last year, go to **Itsdeductible.com**, which provides values for noncash items like clothing and toys, as well as mileage. —JJ Ramberg and Jen Rogers

(Lesson plan)

CENTS SENSE

Your kids are (and should be) blissfully unaware of the economy's ups and downs, but it's still important to teach them the value of a dollar. We spoke to Nathan Dungan, founder of family-finance website Sharesavespend.com, about age-appropriate toys, games, and lessons that can enrich your child's understanding of money. —JJR and JR

AGE	3	4	5	6
STAGE	A stack of coins means as much to a 3-year-old as a bag of marbles. Just help her organize her loot.	Four-year-olds won't get why storekeepers need money for candy, but they can learn that payment equals ownership.	Children can sense money's importance at this age—as well as that saving it can help them obtain things they want.	Around this time, most kids begin to understand the concept of value (i.e., one quarter is worth more than 10 pennies).
CONCEPT	COLLECTING COUNTING	PAYING EARNING	GIVING SAVING	SPENDING PRIORITIZING
WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH THEM	Set up a few money jars (old jam jars work well) for your child, each with a different coin glued or taped to the lid or side. Give her a pile of loose change, and help her figure out which coins go into which jar. This introduces the idea that money should be saved and organized. Get your child a piggy bank—a clear one is ideal—and give her a few coins each month to add to the pot. Every now and then, empty it out and count the number of coins. She won't understand the values, but she will start to feel rewarded by watching them slowly pile up.	Give your child a dollar so he can buy his own toy at the store. Let him hand the cash to the cashier and accept the change back. Try to reinforce the rule that he can't open anything until it is purchased at the register, which helps drive home the concept of paying for possession. Playing "store" or "restaurant" at home can be a fun way to start thinking about the way money is earned. Pay your kid pretend money to serve you play food. He can even write (well, scribble) a bill, which will familiarize him with the fact that people must work to make their money.	At dinner, ask your child, "If you had \$100—enough to buy a huge dollhouse or to save an animal at a shelter—what would you do?" Don't be disappointed by the first answer; use it as a launching point to discuss the concept of charity. (For help choosing one, see below.) Allowance time! Give your child a goal for its use—such as saving for a toy she really wants. Also, books about spending and giving—we like <i>Money, Money, Honey Bunny!</i> by Marilyn Sadler (Random House for Young Readers)—will really start to resonate now.	At the grocery store, let your child choose between three cereals. Discuss how much each costs and what you're getting from each. He may choose a pricier cereal because it includes a toy; that's okay. He'll still learn what makes that box more valuable to him. With your kid's help, sort your grocery list into two categories: "wants" and "needs." Discuss which groceries go in which category. And kids this age can grasp rudimentary business skills, so play Monopoly Junior, or set up that lemonade stand!
RELEVANT TOY	 Clear piggy bank, \$6, containerstore.com	 Fisher-Price toy cash register, \$16, toysrus.com	 Money, Money, Honey Bunny! \$9, amazon.com	 Monopoly Junior Disney edition, \$21, amazon.com
ONE LAST THING	Don't worry that your kids may not understand what money is. Going through the motions will help them respect its value.	Kids learn through observation, but it helps to narrate any transaction, whether you are spending, saving, or donating.	Introduce charities and causes that your kids can relate to—such as kids' clothing drives and animal shelters.	Talk about things you want but can't afford. It's good for kids to see that their parents say no to themselves, too.

SMART GIVING

If your kids are ready to learn how to save, they're ready to learn how to give. Here, three websites to help you kick-start their generosity. —Mireille Hyde

**echoage.org**

Before your kid's birthday party, ask guests to donate money to this site instead of giving gifts. Half of the sum will go toward one large present, the rest to a charity your kid chooses.

**acmesharing.com**

The mission of this blog is to inspire parents to raise socially conscious kids. It suggests books, family rituals, easy lessons, and a number of specific (and worthy) charitable organizations.

**www.thevolunteerfamily.org**

If you all want to get involved, check out this site, which can help you find reputable charities for which you can volunteer together, organized by cause and state.