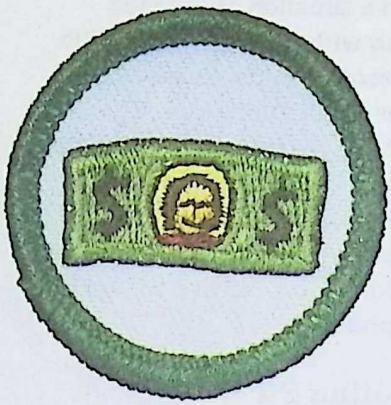
Consumer Power

Make your money last: Learn how to be a smart shopper. Use these activities to get the most for your money.







1. Shop Around

Pick an item you'd like to buy. Find out what three different stores, catalogs, or Web sites charge for the exact same item. Which one sells it the most cheaply? Don't forget to add the cost of taxes and any shipping charges that apply.

2. Comparison Shop

Different companies make different versions of the same item. Pick something you'd like to buy and compare models made by three different manufacturers. Which one gives you the most for your money? Which one suits your needs the best?

3. Stretch That Dollar

Play this game with a friend. Pick a reason to shop: for a friend's birthday present, for back-to-school supplies, or for a holiday gift for a family member. Give yourself a set dollar amount. Then head to the store, armed with a pencil and pad. Who can find the most interesting or useful items for that amount of money?

4. Compare Stores

Not all stores are created equal. Pick three stores and compare:

- Which offers the best return policy?
- Which stands by its product if it falls apart a week later? A month later?
- Which treats you with the most respect?

5. Your Dollars

Look at two or three different ads that are aimed at kids your age. They can be on TV, on radio, or in print. Name three techniques that they use to get your attention. Are they successful?

6. Your Parents' Dollars

Look at two or three ads aimed at adults. Name three techniques that they use to try to get an adult's attention. Do you think they're successful? Ask an adult what they think about the ads.

7. Tie-Ins

When a new movie, singer, athlete, or TV show is "hot," other companies use it to help them sell their products. Pick your favorite singer, movie, athlete, or TV show and use it to sell products that you make up.

8. Name Game

Pick an item that's good, but not very popular. With your friends, family, or troop, rename it. Give it a name that's guaranteed to get people's attention, and make it popular!



9. Pennies Count

Every day for a month, at the end of the day, take the pennies out of your pockets, backpack, or wallet and keep them someplace safe, like a jar or bowl in your room. Whatever you do, don't spend it! At the end of the month, count your pennies. How much money did you "earn?" It really adds up, doesn't it?



10. When You Need to Complain

Practice writing an effective complaint letter to a company that makes something you bought. In the letter, explain why the item you bought was disappointing. Try to remain unemotional, using only the facts to support your argument.