



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Parenting the  
Preschooler



# Save and Spend

Starting money talks early helps children with basic math and counting skills — a benefit in school. Handling money and experiencing small money successes (and sometimes mistakes) helps children learn about saving and spending. Early opportunities lead to future success.

## *Tips for a Smart Start*

- Use play money to practice going to the bank or to the store.
- Start with little spending choices such as picking between two snacks.
- Show children paper money or coins and let them handle money.
- Help children stack coins in piles by color and size.
- Talk about future items children would like to save money to buy.
- Let preschoolers choose between two or three things they want to buy. If they do not have enough money, talk about saving more to get what they really want.
- Demonstrate more vs less by setting up a series of clear plastic cups. Pour water into one container to the top and one halfway. Ask the child which has more and which has less. Continue with different amounts of water relating it to saving and spending money.



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# Money Talk

Model smart savings and spending. Talk with children about a recent savings or spending choice. Use a simple example like buying a snack. Ask the child “What might happen if you buy the more expensive snack?” or “Can you think of another way to save more money to buy this snack another time?”



Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

## Make \$ Learning Fun

- Set up a store at home and use play money to make buying choices. Count the money aloud when paying. Children will imitate much of what they see adults do. If you make a mistake talk to the child about it. Tell them what things you thought about when you made your choice and if there was other important information that will help next time.
- Let children handle real money under your supervision by paying for one item in the grocery store or putting coins in a parking meter.
- Decorate three small containers and label them Save, Spend, Share. Talk with your child about each jar; decide on a savings goal together, what the spending money could buy, and how he would like to share the money to buy a gift or donate to help others.
- Read stories about money and being responsible.

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## Make It Fun With Books

- Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday, by Judith Viorst
- The Berenstain Bears' Trouble with Money, by Stan & Jan Berenstain
- Count on Pablo (Cuenta Con Pablo), by Barbara deRubertis
- Tia Isa Wants a Car (Tía Isa Quiere Un Carro), by Meg Medina
- My Rows and Piles of Coins, by Tololwa M. Mollel

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