

Designing Money

Parent Guide, page 1 of 1

SUMMARY

During this activity, your child will design his or her own money based on the idea that United States currency uses symbols to convey meaning.

WHY

Everyday objects such as pennies and dollar bills can go unnoticed in our lives. We use them all the time, but how often do we really look at them? Taking the time to investigate a familiar thing in detail and then learning to design something similar will strengthen your child's observation skills, creativity, and appreciation for detail.

TIME

- 10-30 minutes or more, depending on your child's interest and whether you choose to implement the After Coloring activity.

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten to 4th grade.

CHALLENGE WORDS

- *barter*: to exchange one thing for another thing, instead of using money
- *cowrie shells*: the shell of a small snail that lives in the sea, these were used as one of the earliest forms of money
- *mint*: a place where coins are made; to make coins
- *portable*: able to be carried
- *divisible*: able to be easily broken into parts (a dollar is divisible into cents)
- *durable*: able to be used a lot without falling apart
- *limitable*: able to be kept to a certain amount without going about that amount

YOU NEED

- Step Back in Time sheets (*attached*)
- Reading a Picture: The Great Seal of the United States sheet (*attached*)
- Directions and Drawing sheets (*attached*)
- a pencil or pen, markers or crayons (*anything to draw with!*)
- a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, \$1 (*optional*)



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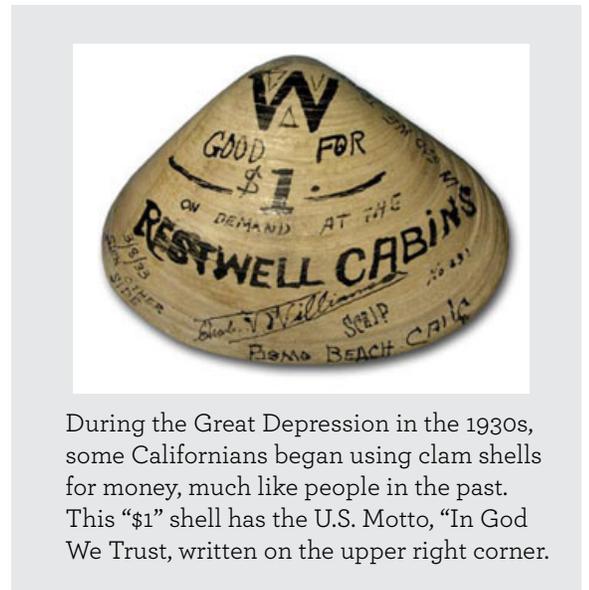
For more information, visit the National Museum of American History's Numismatic Collection online <http://americanhistory.si.edu/numismatics/faqpages/faqs.htm> or visit the American Enterprise website at <http://americanenterprise.si.edu/> and enter the EXPLORE section

People have been using different kinds of money for 11,000 years! At first, people simply traded things they had, like cows, for things they wanted, like feathers and beads, in a system called bartering.

Tip

Think about something you want but do not have. What is it? Now think about the things that are yours. Which of your things would you be willing to give to someone else in order to get that thing you want? That's how we figure out how much something costs.

Bartering worked well for thousands of years. Over time, communities developed different professions. Some people became politicians or priests, while others started businesses where they sold things like cloth and tools. The people who sold these goods no longer wanted to trade for cattle, instead they wanted something that was easy to carry and exchange. This is how early forms of money developed, starting in China around 3,000 years ago. As a group, people decided to treat things like cowrie shells (shells from a small snail) as items of value. They accepted these shells in return for beads or sheep, and then spent those shells on other things they wanted. Several hundred years later, around the 600s AD, the Chinese developed paper money, which slowly became popular.



During the Great Depression in the 1930s, some Californians began using clam shells for money, much like people in the past. This "\$1" shell has the U.S. Motto, "In God We Trust," written on the upper right corner.

To work well, all money needs to have four things in common:

1. Money needs to be *portable*, meaning you can carry it easily
2. Money needs to be *durable*, meaning that it must be tough so it won't break
3. Money needs to be *limitable*, meaning you can control how much of it is in use; you wouldn't want to use pebbles, for instance, because someone could always find more
4. Money needs to be easily *divisible*, meaning you can use smaller pieces of it if you want, for instance a dollar is divisible into pennies

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Tip

To practice determining what kinds of goods meet these four requirements, visit [EconEdLink.org](http://www.econedlink.org) and check out the activity “No Funny Money, Honey...I Want the Real Thing!” <http://www.econedlink.org/interactives/>

The history of U.S. coins and paper money goes back nearly 400 years. The first American coins were made, or minted, in the area that is now Massachusetts starting in the 1650s. The coin was known as the Pine Tree Shilling because there was a picture of a pine tree on the back, or reverse, of the coin. After the American Revolution, the U.S. Congress passed The Coinage Act on April 2, 1792, which created the U.S. Mint. The U.S. Mint is where American coins have been made ever since.



The Pine Tree Shilling, first minted in Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1650s

Paper money, known as currency, was not always controlled by the federal government. By the time of the Civil War (1861-1865), there were 1,600 different banks in the United States creating and distributing their own money; the result was that Americans were using nearly 30,000 different types of money! This system made it very difficult for business owners and people in general to tell whether they were buying and selling things with real money. Therefore, Congress decided it was time to begin producing official currency and to pass laws preventing others from designing and printing unofficial money. The first official U.S. One Dollar bill was issued in 1862.



Pauline and John-John use coins to buy the ingredients they need to make lemonade!
[Image from *Lemonade in Winter*]

Since the U.S. Treasury Department took over producing all U.S. currency, Congress has passed several laws regulating how our money is made and what it should look like. In 1957, for instance, they passed a law requiring that all American money bear the U.S. motto, “In God We Trust.” Even today, the Mint issues a new quarter design every three months! From 1999-2009, the Mint created 56 new quarter designs and also issued new penny designs in 2009 and 2010.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/money/>.



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Reading a Picture: *The Great Seal of the United States*, page 1 of 3

One of the most important pictures on our money is the Great Seal of the United States. A seal is like a signature; the U.S. government uses it on important documents and official currency to show that these things are approved by the government. While looking through this page, take out a \$1 bill and try to find the Great Seal.

Tip

Take a deeper look at the \$1 here!

<http://www.philadelphiafed.org/publications/economic-education/symbols-on-american-money.pdf>

The Great Seal of the United States was designed in 1782.

On one side we see an unfinished pyramid with an eye looking out from the top. The pyramid is meant to show that

America is strong and durable. It is built from 13 rows of stones, one row for each of the 13 original colonies in the United States. The eye at the top is meant to be the eye of God, watching over the new nation.

Opposite the pyramid is an eagle with its wings spread wide, flying upwards. The eagle is the symbol of the United States, and the fact that it is flying is meant to suggest that the country is strong and independent.



image from Philadelphia Federal Reserve

In its left talons, the eagle is holding a bunch of arrows, which suggest war, and in its right talons, the eagle holds an olive branch, which

suggests peace. The eagle's head is facing the olive branch to show that the U.S. wants peace and does not want war.

Even the colors on the seal have meaning. The shield the eagle is carrying looks a bit like the American Flag. The blue field at the top is meant to signify fairness and caution, while the red means that this country is brave and the white shows that it is pure and good.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/money/>.



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Directions and Drawing, page 1 of 3

Use this space to design your own coins and paper money!

Before You Begin

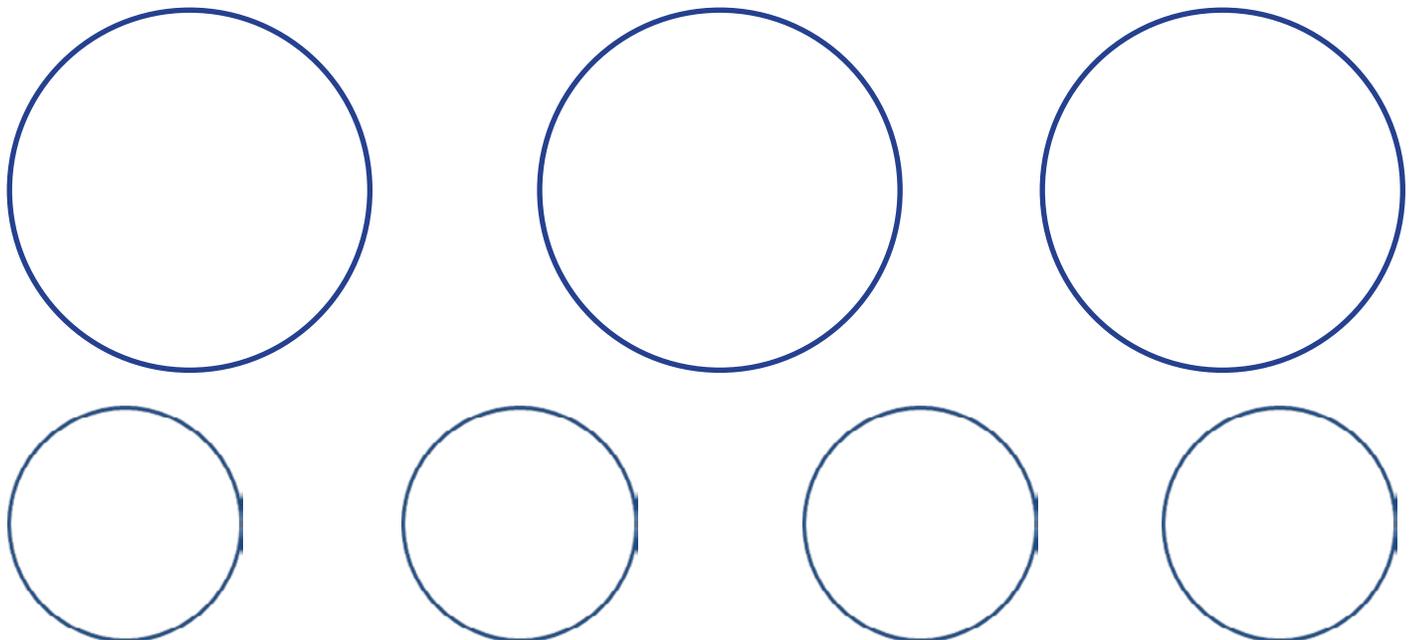
Visit the website *Legendary Coins & Currency* and look through some of the many versions of American coins and paper money! Many of these designs show what Americans at different moments in our history have thought were important. What sorts of pictures appear on older U.S. coins? Why were these pictures used? What do they mean?

Visit! <http://amhistory.si.edu/coins/flash/exhibition.shtml>

Design Your Own Money!

What kinds of images are important to you? Why are they important? Make sure to include symbols on the money you design. Think about using the symbols you learned about on the Reading a Picture page or during your online exploration, and definitely remember to include a few symbols that are important to you.

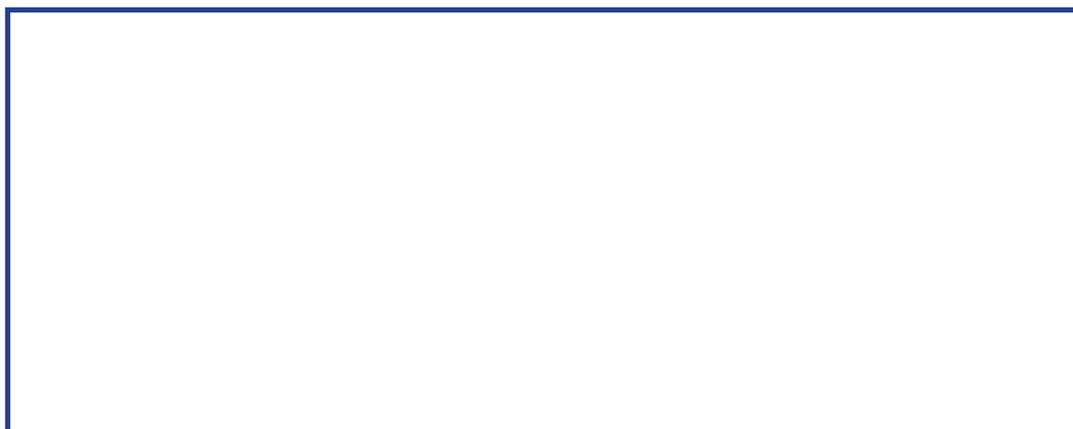
Use these shapes to design your money. Start with coins:



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Now try some bills. How much will each bill be worth?



Print out more copies of this page to design more money!

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After Coloring

Pauline and John-John used the money they made selling lemonade and limeade to buy something they wanted: popsicles! How can you use the money you made in this activity to buy the things you want? Create a money system at home!

What sorts of things do you wish you could purchase at home? Is it more hours playing in the yard? To do a different chore than the one you're supposed to do? What do your parents want? Someone to help with the dishes? Someone to sweep the floor?

1. Start by making 10 or more copies of each of your bills and coins. Make enough copies of each so that everyone in your family will be able to start with an equal number of each bill and coin.

2. Talk with your family members about what things they value. Is it hugs? Is it doing the dishes, making your bed? Is it homemade arts and crafts, or ice cream, or a trip to the movies?

3. Together, decide how much these things should cost in terms of the money you created. Is making your own dinner worth five bills? Two bills? It's up to you!

4. Give everyone an equal amount of "money" to start off with, and let the play begin! Pay each other for the things you want and receive money for the things you sell. Keep it up for a day or two to see how it goes!

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WHY

This activity is especially useful for establishing a class currency. Students earn this currency for classroom participation and then spend it for rewards.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be better able to:

- Understand the meaning and use of symbols and images on money.
- Understand why some things work better than others as money.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Demonstrate a grasp of the history of money and how people have used money.
- Be able to explain what the symbols on the Great Seal of the United States signify.

STANDARDS

IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

NCHS History Standards

K-4 History Content Standards

- 4E: The student understands national symbols through which American values and principles are expressed.

K-4 History Thinking Standards

- 2H: Draw upon the visual data presented in photographs, paintings, cartoons, and architectural drawings.

Common Core Standards

Mathematics

CCSS.Math.Content.2.MD.C.8 Solve word problems involving dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies, using \$ and ¢ symbols appropriately. Example: If you have 2 dimes and 3 pennies, how many cents do you have?

