

Making connections between education and income

Students explore the connection between education and earning through two matching games.

Learning goals

Big idea

Getting more education can often lead to earning a higher salary after you graduate.

Essential questions

- What education choices are open to students after completing high school?
- How do different levels of education connect to occupational choices and income?

Objectives


- Identify several education pathways students can take after high school
- Understand how education and training choices influence occupations and possible income levels

NOTE

Please remember to consider your students' accommodations and special needs to ensure that all students are able to participate in a meaningful way.

KEY INFORMATION

Building block:

 Financial knowledge and decision-making skills

Grade level: Middle school (6-8)

Age range: 11-14

Topic: Earn (Learning about careers, Making money)

School subject: (CTE) Career and technical education

Teaching strategy: Direct instruction

Bloom's Taxonomy level: Understand, Apply, Analyze

Activity duration: 45-60 minutes

National Standards for Personal Financial Education, 2021

Earning income: 8-1, 8-3

These standards are cumulative, and topics are not repeated in each grade level. This activity may include information students need to understand before exploring this topic in more detail.

What students will do

- Examine the different levels of education they can complete.
- Match the levels and years of education to occupational choices and match occupations to median salaries.

Preparing for this activity

- While it's not necessary, completing the "[Meeting your future self](#)" activity first may make this one more meaningful.
- Print copies of all student materials for each student, or prepare for students to access them electronically.
- Secure access to the Internet and computers or tablets so students can research occupations they're interested in and the education those occupations require.
- Become familiar with the "Occupation Finder," a resource of the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/occupation-finder.htm>.

What you'll need

THIS TEACHER GUIDE

- **Making connections between education and income** (guide)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_making-connections-education-income_guide.pdf](#)

STUDENT MATERIALS

- **Making connections between education and income** (worksheet)
[cfpb_building_block_activities_making-connections-education-income_worksheet.pdf](#)
- Computers or tablets with Internet access
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics' "Occupation Finder" at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/occupation-finder.htm>.

Exploring key financial concepts

When thinking about what kind of job you want when you grow up, it's important to keep in mind how much education you'll need and the salary you can earn for different occupations. People who choose high-paying occupations like surgeons or lawyers may earn more money than people in other occupations. But surgeons and lawyers have to go to school for much longer and earn additional degrees before they can start earning higher pay. Often, the level of education you achieve has a direct impact on how much money you can earn.

TIP

Because financial products, terms, and laws change, students should be encouraged to always look for the most up-to-date information.

Teaching this activity

Whole-class introduction

- Explain to students that they'll complete two matching activities to learn about different levels of education and the connection between education and salaries.
- Tell students that different careers require different levels of education. Ask them to brainstorm why this might be.
- Distribute the "Making connections between education and income" worksheet to each student.
- Be sure that students understand key vocabulary:
 - **Associate's degree:** A degree usually awarded for at least two years of full-time academic study beyond high school.
 - **Bachelor's degree:** A degree usually awarded for at least four years of full-time academic study beyond high school.
 - **Career:** A profession that may span your lifetime and includes your education, training, professional memberships, volunteering, and full history of paid work. Can be a synonym for occupation.
 - **Doctoral degree:** A degree usually awarded for at least three years of full-time academic work beyond a bachelor's degree.
 - **Master's degree:** A degree usually awarded for one or two years of full-time academic study beyond a bachelor's degree.
 - **Occupation:** Describes a type of work with associated tasks, education and training, typical wages, work settings, and more. Can be a synonym for career.

TIP

Visit CFPB's financial education glossary at consumerfinance.gov/financial-education-glossary/.

- **Post-secondary school certificate (non-degree):** A certificate or credential that an educational institution awards after a student completes formal schooling lasting from a few weeks to two years after high school. A certificate is not a degree.
 - Note: It may be helpful to clarify for students that an occupation describes a type of work with similar tasks, while a career describes the work path or journey a person takes. While the two words have slightly different meanings, they may be used synonymously.
- Then explain the differences in the levels of education.

Individual or group work

- Students can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups.
- Explain that students first will match the occupations in their worksheet with the level of education the occupation requires.
 - Tell students that each level of education will have three occupations.
 - Students should write the corresponding occupations in the blank cell for each level of education.
- Once the students have finished, use the answer guide to go over the answers.
- Then students will match the median annual salary with the occupation.
 - Make sure students understand that the level of education you complete influences the type of occupation you can get, which may impact how much money you earn.
 - Students should write the median salary that corresponds to each occupation.
 - They'll select salaries from the list on their worksheet.
- Once the students have finished, use the answer guide to go over the answers.

NOTE

Salary amounts change every year. The salaries in this activity are from 2018.

Wrap-up

- Ask for volunteers to share their answers to the reflection questions and start a discussion about occupations and education.

Suggested next steps

Consider searching for other [CFPB activities](#) that address the topic of earning, including learning about careers and making money. Suggested activities include [“Comparing higher education choices”](#) or [“Increasing your earning potential.”](#) You can also direct students to the U.S. Department of Labor’s website <https://www.careeronestop.org/>, where they can explore career options.

Measuring student learning

Students’ responses to the matching activities and reflection questions can give you a sense of their understanding.

This answer guide provides possible answers for the “Making connections between education and income” worksheet. **Keep in mind that students’ answers may vary.** The important thing is for students to have reasonable justification for their answers.

Answer guide

Matching activity 1: Level of education required for different occupations

Level of education completed	Years of education after high school	Occupations at this level
No high school diploma	0	Construction worker, Cashier, Waiter/Waitress
High school diploma	0	Bus driver, Chef, Receptionist
Post-secondary school certification	A few weeks to two years	Car mechanic, Electrician, Hairdresser
Associate's degree	Two years	Computer support specialist, Dental hygienist, Preschool teacher
Bachelor's degree	Four years	Accountant, Airline pilot, Multimedia artist
Master's degree	Six years	Librarian, Physician assistant, School principal
Doctoral degree	At least seven years	Lawyer, Surgeon, Veterinarian

Matching activity 2: Yearly salary for different occupations

Occupation	Median yearly salary
Accountant	\$70,500
Bus driver	\$34,450
Car mechanic	\$40,710
Computer support specialist	\$53,470
Physician assistant	\$108,610
Surgeon	\$208,000
Waiter/waitress	\$21,780