

Understanding Money

Concept: Money and Making Change

Grade Level: Grades 1-3

Materials Needed:

- Cardboard
- “Fake” coin money

Directions: Students must first understand money before they use it as a manipulative in learning other math skills. Many students have difficulty understanding why a nickel is worth less than a dime when it is so much larger in size. The following activity will give students a better understanding of money and its value.

Get “fake” coins at a local dollar store. Give each student a set of these coins that includes 50 pennies, 10 nickels, 5 dimes, 2 quarters, and 1 half-dollar. If your students have progressed to working with one-dollar bills, double the amounts in the set above and add 1 one-dollar bill.

Activity 1

Step 1: Instruct students to sort the set into piles of like coins. Ask them what they notice about the sizes of the coins.

Step 2: Have the students tell you how many pennies it would take to equal one nickel how many pennies would equal one dime. Ask these questions about all the coins. Students should begin to see that the size of each coin is dependent on its value.

Step 3: Have students investigate how many different combinations of coins they can find to cover one dime and keep track of these on a sheet of paper. The combinations they should find are 2 nickels, 10 pennies, and 1 nickel with 5 pennies. Once the students have found all the possible combinations, have them do the same with the quarter, the half-dollar, and the dollar.

Activity 2

Step 1. Allow students to use the coins in the previous activity when learning to make change. Suggest items the students may buy and their costs. Ask students what coins they will use to pay for an item and have them determine the amount of change (if any).

Step 2. Have students investigate how many different combinations of coins they can find to pay for the items.