



Your Financial Future:

A GUIDE TO SAVING MONEY

A **Toolkit** for FBLA High School Students, by Students | 2023

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Welcome Letter

Hello, FBLA members!

Welcome to our new financial literacy toolkit! Within this guide, you will find the resources needed to begin a journey toward financial independence. This toolkit will equip you with the knowledge to form fundamental skills regarding personal finance that will be essential to your life beyond your high school years. We hope that after reading this guide, you will become more confident in your ability to handle your own finances.

The knowledge we have gained from reading books and taking courses since our freshman year has given us the capacity to share this financial literacy information with others. Inside, we share some of our personal stories and insights from books and other sources about financial literacy.

Financial literacy is a crucial subject, and a lack of wisdom on the topic can hamper one's professional and personal growth.

Allow the knowledge you gain while in high school to be the backbone of your future success. With many of you heading to college in the next year, take advantage of the next few months to prepare for the real world. This is your time to succeed and build the future you desire. You'll be amazed at how far you can go and where your financial literacy journey takes you!

Whether you are a beginner or well-versed in finance, we wish you the best in your financial journey. Feel free to reach out to us or our council members if you have any questions, feedback, or concerns.

With gratitude,



NOAH KILLEEN
National Treasurer



NATALIE COON
North Central Region Vice President

DIVING INTO FINANCE: THE BASICS

It is never too early to start managing your own money. Starting with good practices and habits now will set you up for financial freedom in the future. While students can't make every financial decision for themselves, there are still some things you can do while in high school. You can put these basics into practice in the [FBLA LifeSmarts Challenge](#) and the [Knowledge Matters Virtual Business Challenge](#), which test consumer responsibilities and personal finance!

The FBLA LifeSmarts Challenge and Knowledge Matters Virtual Business Challenge both have rounds in the fall and spring. [LifeSmarts](#) is a national education competition that's focused on personal finance and consumer topics, with questions ranging from social media to credit reports. LifeSmarts is a national partner of FBLA and provides three separate events for FBLA-affiliated LifeSmarts teams: the FBLA LifeSmarts Challenge, State and National LifeSmarts Championships, and monthly TeamSmarts Quizzes. [Knowledge Matters](#) is another national FBLA partner. Virtual Business Personal Finance Challenge competitors make personal finance decisions for a simulated person. The concepts students manage include opening bank accounts, paying bills, filing taxes, applying for jobs, enrolling in educational courses, paying for goods, applying for credit cards, determining schedules, budgeting, and more.

Key components to managing your finances

Saving

Keep your money as your money! Saving in the form of savings accounts, Certificates of Deposit (CDs), and investments builds your future financial freedom. Once you have saved enough money, you can begin spending more money on the things you love while still making smart financial decisions.

Budgeting

Keeping a consistent budget is the best way to manage your hard-earned money. Giving a role to every dollar keeps it in the bank longer and allows for more thoughtful spending. While starting a budget is hard, especially if you've never created one, the long-term benefits are significant. There are a multitude of templates available online to help you get started. Budgeting is also a great way to manage any debt and credit you may have. Through budgeting, you can successfully eliminate some of your long-term debt more quickly by tracking where your money is going. The same goes for improving your credit!

Income

A steady income is a necessity for any healthy budget, regardless of your level of financial literacy. Finding a well-paying and stable job allows you to live the lifestyle you want. Don't limit yourself to one job — start a side hustle or your own small business. The more sources of income you have, the easier it will be to become financially independent!

Discipline

Discipline is perhaps the most important character trait you need when managing your money. While it is tempting to make large purchases, it is crucial to set goals and expectations concerning your money management and to hold yourself accountable. Financial discipline includes limiting unnecessary spending, paying off bills and debt on time, and staying away from unnecessary loans.

Banking

Bank accounts are typically the first financial account to be opened under your name. This is where you will take your first steps toward managing your money through a checking and/or savings account. Bank accounts are a crucial part of the personal finance journey, as they have a lower risk and are generally insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) up to \$250,000.

Managing Credit & Debit Cards

Credit cards allow you to borrow money that is not your own from an issuer. This makes it easier to pay for large purchases, as you pay the money back over a period of time. Interest accrues if the total balance is not paid back each month, so be sure to pay back the “credit” you take out to keep interest payments low. Debit cards are a way to spend your own money, as they are directly tied to your checking account. Unless you are enrolled in overdraft protection, this means you can’t spend more than you have.

Starting with good practices and habits now will set you up for financial freedom in the future.



PAYING YOURSELF FIRST

Paying yourself first requires discipline. It also entails prioritizing long-term financial security, which requires planning. To do so, you need to follow three steps: determine a financial goal that you want to achieve, consider how much you can afford, and create a savings plan to help you reach your goal. This process is something that begins with the idea of putting your future self and financial situation first. An easy way to begin practicing the idea of paying yourself first is to use the strategies and skills you've gained in the LifeSmarts and Knowledge Matters challenges.

STEP ONE: Determine a Financial Goal

This goal should be realistic for whatever time frame you have set for yourself. Examples of short-term goals include saving for a small vacation, a car, a new device, or some renovations to your home. Long-term financial goals could include establishing an emergency fund, purchasing a home, setting money aside in a retirement fund, or even just saving money for future use.

STEP TWO: Consider How Much You Can Afford

Review your budget by looking at bills, subscription services, and other expenses to determine how much you can put toward your goal.

STEP THREE: Create a Savings Plan

Create a separate savings account with no intentions to make withdrawals for a set period of time. Then, regularly deposit a set amount of your earnings directly into that account.

The idea of paying yourself first is essential in your journey to financial success. Even putting just a small amount of your income toward savings can significantly impact your future financial situation—especially if you start when you are younger. Although the act of saving for future use may be frustrating in the present, it will ultimately pay off.

GOOD VS. BAD DEBT

Good Debt

Good debt is debt that you take on to help you make more money in the future. Generally, this includes debt that comes from investments in a variety of assets that are expected to appreciate in value. Examples include a mortgage for a primary residence, a loan for a college education, or a business loan to start or expand a profitable enterprise.

Bad Debt

Bad debt is the type of debt that takes money out of your pocket. These debts can hurt your financial situation and credit rating. An example of bad debt is maintaining a large balance on a high-interest credit card. Bad debt is a contingency that must be accounted for by all businesses that extend credit to customers, as there is always a risk that payment won't be collected. Bad debt can occur when individuals either don't make their monthly payments on high-interest credit cards in a timely manner or when they use loans for discretionary purchases like vacations or furniture.

Cost

Good debt typically has lower interest rates and more favorable terms than bad debt. A home loan typically has an interest rate below 10 percent, whereas a credit card interest rate can be in excess of 25 percent. Banks and other financial institutions realize that their money isn't as safe if someone purchases smaller consumable items with it, whereas an investment like a house typically has collateral to collect upon.

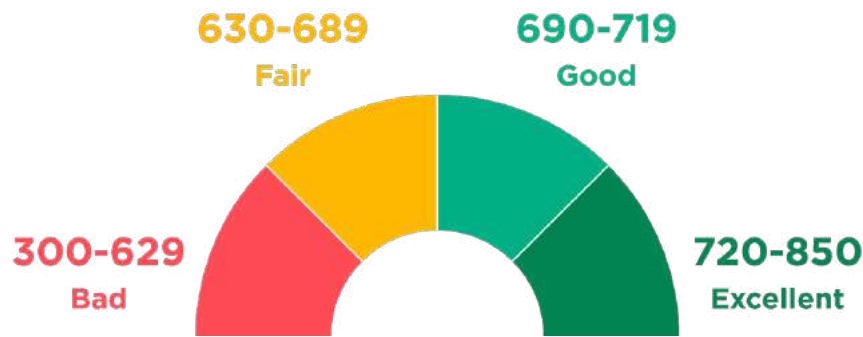
Risk

Good debt is usually less risky than bad debt since it's an investment and appreciates in value, offsetting the cost of the debt. Bad debt, however, decreases in value, and the balance on the debt can increase rapidly if not paid quickly due to less favorable interest rates and terms. All told, it's important to remember that good debt can also be risky; even starting a business with a solid financial plan can be tough depending on the current economic environment.

Long-term Impact

Good debt can have a positive impact on a person's financial well-being and wealth, while bad debt can lead to financial difficulties and harm a person's overall financial situation, including their credit score. However, it's important to realize that not making payments on any type of debt can put a person in a worse position financially. All debt must be managed properly to have a minimal or positive impact on your credit score. This is important because lenders, landlords, and other financial institutions use credit scores to determine a person's likelihood of repaying debt, and therefore whether they are a good candidate for a loan or line of credit. A higher credit score generally leads to better borrowing options and lower interest rates. And some employers will consider a person's credit rating as a factor in hiring.

Credit Score Scale



Source: NerdWallet

The DOs and DON'Ts of Debt!

Do **prioritize paying off high-interest debt (anything greater than 10 percent).** This can include credit card debt, car loans, personal loans, student loans, etc.

Don't **get store credit cards.** Sure, they have some benefits, and they might make sense if you shop there a lot, but most store credit cards typically have a high APR (Annual Percentage Rate, which represents the yearly interest rate that a borrower pays on a loan or credit card) and deferred interest rates. You won't really get discounts on your purchases if you forget a payment or can't pay your balance in full.

Do **reverse-budget.** Make important payments at the beginning of each month and use the remaining income guilt-free.

Don't **spend beyond your means.** Credit can be a tool to pay for things you can't afford at the moment, but you should be managing your finances in such a way that you're only buying things on credit that you will be able to reasonably repay.

Do **be consistent with payments.** Missing one credit card payment won't have much of an impact, but missing more than two or three can have long-term effects on your financial situation. For example, it can decrease your credit score, preventing you from getting essential loans to purchase houses or cars, in addition to adding costly late or missed payment fees to your balance.

Don't **forget to frequently (and intentionally) check credit reports.** Sometimes, it can be easy to push these things aside, especially when there's information you don't want to see. You also want to look for potential fraud and challenge it. Checking credit reports is the first step in preventing good debt from becoming mismanaged.

Do **have a strategy to pay off your long-term debts.** See examples on the next page.

Don't **believe credit card myths.** Statements like "credit should be used to pay for things you can't afford" and "credit cards are free money" are fallacies.

Debt Payoff Strategies

Snowball Method

Pay off the smallest balances first, and tier your debts from smallest to largest. You can use momentum to focus the bulk of your payments on the smallest debts first, and get a small win with each credit card you pay off, while also taking another monthly bill off your plate.

Avalanche Method

Pay off debts with the highest interest rate first. Tier debts from highest to lowest; the sooner you get rid of high-interest debt, the sooner you'll see improvement in your financial situation!

Take Advantage of Credit Offers

If you have the ability to pay off your debt in a year, find a credit card with a 12-month 0% APR introductory rate. Then, transfer your accumulated debt to the card with 0% interest, and split the payments up over 12 months. Still, it's important to recognize that too much credit can negatively impact your credit score.

We hope this information has helped you to understand the difference between good and bad debt. While good debt has financial benefits, if it isn't managed properly, it can become bad debt and worsen your financial situation. Don't be intimidated by personal loans and credit cards that have a high risk of turning into bad debt! If managed responsibly, credit cards can improve your credit score and help you when applying for loans in the future. Ironically, debt can be a powerful tool for building wealth.

All debt must be managed properly to have a minimal or positive impact on your credit score.



MANAGING MONEY IN COLLEGE

NOTE: Although managing money in college is very important, this section was written by high school students. Always do your own research and check in with your family and friends before making financial decisions in college.

Got into college? Congratulations! Now, how are you planning to finance it? Did you get a full ride? Other scholarships? Grants? Loans? It is very important to manage your money before you enter college—and while you're there.

Pre-College

So you got into college: What's the total price of continuing your education? Let's use a fictional example: you were accepted to the University of FBLA, which has an annual tuition of \$62,000, with a partial scholarship. That scholarship works out to be around \$20,000 per year, meaning \$10,000 per semester. You also received a financial aid package totaling around \$12,000 per year or \$6,000 per semester. Subtracting the scholarship and aid package from the annual tuition would leave you with \$30,000 that you still need to cover. Student loans can help decrease the amount you owe at the time of your education.

That's a lot of potential debt to accumulate, so when you are actually attending college, it's important to have a plan to manage your money.

Use a Budget

Did you know that only 50 percent of college students use a personal budget, according to the College Ave Student Loans [survey](#)? Using a budget is a fantastic way to manage your money in college, and it's not that hard to do! One type of budget recommended for college students is a zero-based budget. In this budget, your income minus your expenses should equal \$0 at the end of every month. By listing your estimated income and expenses at the beginning of each month, every dollar you bring in has a pre-set purpose and won't be used for impulse purchases.

Even if it's not a zero-based budget, a budget of any kind will help you. By starting with a plan, you will limit impulse purchases and discretionary spending, which could distract you from achieving your financial goals.

We know that being a full-time college student is time-consuming and can be a lot to handle; however, if you want to get a head start paying off the debt you've amassed, or simply save your money for the future, you should try and find a job. Work study programs offer paid positions at your school, but are typically reserved for students who demonstrate financial need. Simple jobs you can do in your free time include delivering food, walking dogs, tutoring, and more.

Save at least \$500 in an Emergency Fund

Guess what? You dropped your computer. It's okay; accidents happen. But now, you must pay for repairs. This is where so many college students get into trouble. They don't expect the unexpected and find themselves in debt fixing a problem. Don't let that be you! Emergencies like health-related issues, broken items, and stolen property happen to everyone, so be prepared! Set aside **at least** \$500 in an emergency fund at all times, and only use it in true emergency situations. Don't cheat — you'll thank yourself later.

Be Frugal

Make sure to be frugal, meaning that you should take full advantage of your meal plan or cook at home, use your school's fitness center instead of signing up for an expensive gym membership, and take advantage of free or low-cost weekend activities to keep your entertainment budget to a minimum. Some affordable activities include bike riding, binge-watching shows with the food you have at home, doing a dessert bake-off, having a picnic on/off-campus, volunteering around the school, tailgating, or finding student discounts for local events happening in the area.

Conclusion

We know college can be financially stressful for incoming freshmen and equally stressful for a student's parents or guardians. We hope that by incorporating these ideas, your life in school will be more stress-free and fun by planning ahead with a budget, creating an emergency fund, and being more frugal.

A GUIDE TO THE STOCK MARKET GAME

What Is the Stock Market?

When you hear “stock market,” the following emojis may come to mind: 📈📉📊📌👤💰. The stock market is where companies offer shares of their company, or stock, to the public or a limited group of investors. These investors engage in buying and selling shares of companies, otherwise known as trading. Through our partnership with the [Stock Market Game](#), FBLA offers students the opportunity to participate in a simulation of the real-world stock market. The stock market is part of the free-market economy allowing companies and investors to gain many benefits: companies can raise money by offering shares of their company to the public while investors can purchase those shares to participate in the company’s financial achievements, make a profit, and earn income through dividends.

Basic Terms You Should Know

S&P 500	The most popular index that tracks the performance of the 500 largest publicly traded companies in the U.S.
Stock Exchanges	A trading platform to buy and sell stocks (i.e., NYSE, NASDAQ).
Equity	The amount of capital invested or owned by a company’s owner.
Portfolio	A collection of investments or a wide range of assets owned by investors.
Sectors	A group of stocks with similarities in industry, business models, products, or services (11 total sectors).
Ticker Symbol	The short, unique combination of letters assigned to a company’s stock; used to identify the stock when trading to avoid confusion.
Small/Mid/Large Cap	One method of measuring a company’s size; the total dollar market value of a company’s outstanding shares of stock; used to determine various performance metrics (i.e., price-to-earnings ratio).
Blue Chip Stocks	Refers to very large companies that are well-recognized, well-established, and dependable with excellent reputations (e.g., Berkshire Hathaway, Coca-Cola, etc.).
Penny Stocks	A small company’s stock, typically traded for less than \$5 per share.
Public vs. Private Company	A public company sells shares to the public at large, usually on stock exchanges; a private company does not sell shares publicly, but rather to private investors and/or employees.
Return on Investment (ROI)	A performance indicator measuring the amount of return or benefits from investment (i.e., profit minus cost = ROI).
Earnings Per Share (EPS) Growth	An indicator of a company’s profits and growth of earnings per share over time, used to identify a stock’s profitability.

Basic Terms You Should Know (continued)

Bullish vs. Bearish	Bullish markets perform on an upward trend and stock prices rise; Bearish markets perform on a downward trend and stock prices fall.
Market Value	A company's value based on financial markets (i.e., current stock price times the number of outstanding shares trading in the market); also referred to as "market capitalization," typically abbreviated as market cap.
Yield	The amount of income an investment generates, or interest payments an investor receives from bonds or dividends. Yields of 2 percent to 5 percent are typically considered good.
Revenue vs. Profit	Revenue is another word for total sales; profit is earnings minus costs.
Merger & Acquisitions (M&A)	A merger is the process of combining two companies into one; acquisition is when one company buys or otherwise obtains another company (i.e., big fish eats little fish).

Helpful Investing Strategies for the Stock Market Game

Diversification

Spreading your investments among different stocks, bonds, and other asset types is known as diversification. By doing this, you can lower your risk and ensure that no one investment type makes up an excessive amount of your portfolio. A well-diversified portfolio can help you withstand market ups and downs.

Market Research

Before making an investment, it's crucial to conduct research on the stocks and assets you're thinking about investing in. Reading news and analysis, keeping up with market trends, and keeping an eye on a company's performance are important ways to make smart investment decisions.

Buy vs. Sell

While selling stocks can make quick money, buying stocks is a long-term investment strategy. It's important to understand various aspects of a company, such as its background and profit potential, when purchasing stocks. When selling stocks, you need to comprehend market conditions, as well as the price at which you purchased the stock. Profits and losses are made every minute, so it's important to do your research and stay vigilant.

Technical vs. Fundamental Analysis

Technical analysis uses things like charts to study market trends and forecast stock growth using quantifiable metrics. On the other hand, fundamental analysis examines a company's financial stability, profit potential, and growth possibilities. These are usually more intangible and require further review into a company's background. When making financial decisions, both approaches can be helpful, but each has its advantages and disadvantages.

The Biggest Impact: Market Influencers

Worldwide Hazards

Worldwide events can impact the market tremendously. Natural disasters and epidemics can cause significant damage to supply chains and other necessary components of business operations. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted consumer and investor behaviors, causing major selloffs that caused stock indexes to plunge.

Current Affairs

If companies face restrictions on their ability to generate revenue efficiently due to the implementation of trade embargoes, and even ongoing wars, the value of their stock can drop. For example, in 2022, the United States placed restrictions on domestic chip manufacturers in response to supply chain issues, which restricted their ability to sell their products to China.

Economic Trends

Inflation and interest rates are two great examples of how economic trends within our world can also influence the markets. If interest rates rise, people are less likely to spend because it becomes more expensive to borrow money, and some people choose to save money so they can earn more on their savings. This leads to decreased revenue, which can harm profits and, in turn, stocks.

Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A)

Oftentimes, companies purchase and/or merge with other companies. When a company is able to acquire new technology or a higher market share, its propensity for growth rises; this leads to more investments and a higher stock value. For example, Kroger & Albertsons recently began a \$24.6 billion merger, which would make Kroger second in the U.S. grocery industry, allowing it to control more than 70 percent of the grocery market in 160 cities.

Getting Started

Begin by visiting fbla.org/portfolio-items/stock-market-game/. Here, you'll be able to find valuable information regarding the FBLA Stock Market Game (SMG). Students in the SMG may work individually or in teams to manage a successful portfolio of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds.

IMPORTANT: Educating yourself about investing is crucial. You can start by reading books, watching educational videos, or taking online courses. Additionally, you should always be mindful of the risks involved with investing. Remember to always do your own research in order to minimize the risk you take on while maximizing your profit.

Resources for Further Reading:

<https://www.investopedia.com/>

<https://www.nerdwallet.com/>

<https://finance.yahoo.com/>

<https://www.businessinsider.com/>

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PASSIVE INCOME

Overview

Passive income is income earned with little to no ongoing effort, often through investments like high-yield stocks and real estate. Passive income is a fantastic way to supplement your income stream, and by doing your research and investing in the right ventures, you can build a steady stream of money coming in without much effort. Passive income cannot be mistaken as a sole source of income, however. Particularly if you are new to passive income, it is important to have a steady, active source of income already established in case your passive venture fails. For more information on passive income, check out the [LifeSmarts Resources](#) for specific modules, guides, and information for building wealth.

Freelance Work

Do you have a skill, such as graphic design or writing, that you could offer to others? Freelancing is a great way for high schoolers to earn passive income by taking on projects and getting paid for their work. You can offer your services on platforms like [Fiverr](#) or [Upwork](#) and watch your earnings grow as you complete more projects.

YouTube

If you're creative and have a passion for making videos, YouTube could be a great platform for earning passive income. Create engaging content, grow your audience, and start earning money from ads and sponsorships. However, being a content creator is harder than it may appear, and it often takes people several years to perfect the mastery of growing a successful YouTube channel.

Affiliate Marketing

Are you a social media influencer or do you have a large following on a specific platform? You can earn passive income by promoting products or services through affiliate marketing. Simply share a unique link with your followers and earn a commission for each sale made through your link.

Selling Digital Products

Do you have a passion for photography, design, or writing? You can create and sell digital products, such as ebooks, printables, and stock photos, and earn passive income every time someone purchases one of your products. While it may be time-consuming, this could be a successful way to make money using any hobbies you may have.

As a high school student, you have the opportunity to start earning passive income early and build a strong financial foundation for your future. By exploring these options and finding the one that's right for you, you can start earning money while you focus on your studies and personal growth.

Getting started

Identify Your Skills & Interests

The first step in developing a passive income stream is to identify your skills and interests. What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing? These are the things you should focus on when exploring different passive income opportunities.

Research Different Options

Once you have a better idea of what you want to do, start researching different passive-income opportunities that align with your skills and interests. From freelancing to selling digital products, there are many ways for high school students to earn passive income.

Create a Budget

Before you start earning passive income, it's important to create a budget. This will help you determine how much money you can invest in different opportunities and track your progress over time to determine if your investment is worthwhile.

Start Small

It's important to start small when developing passive income, especially if you're a high school student with limited financial resources. Invest in a small project, such as selling digital products or taking online surveys, and use the money you earn to invest in larger opportunities in the future.

Learn from Mistakes

No one is perfect, and everyone makes mistakes. Don't be afraid to experiment and make mistakes when developing passive income. Use these experiences as learning opportunities to grow and improve.

Network & Collaborate

Building a network and collaborating with others is a great way to learn and grow your passive income. Reach out to other high school students, entrepreneurs, and experts in your field for advice and guidance.

Stay Focused & Determined

The key to success in developing passive income is staying focused and determined. It may take time and effort to see results, but with persistence and hard work, you can build a strong passive income stream that will benefit you for years to come.

By following these steps, you can begin the path to developing passive income as a high school student. Whether you want to earn extra spending money now or build a foundation for financial independence, there are many opportunities out there.

By doing your research and investing in the right ventures, you can build a steady stream of money coming in without much effort.



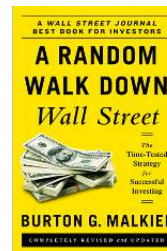
WHAT WE ARE READING

Check out some of the financial literacy books council members are reading!

Kesia Osman is reading

A Random Walk Down Wall Street by Burton G. Malkiel

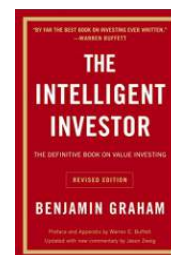
Author Burton G. Malkiel analyzes the stock market and the “random walk hypothesis,” demonstrating how one cannot consistently outperform market averages. The book introduces the reader to new strategies for investing and prepares them for facing adversity in the market.



Revanth Poondru is reading

The Intelligent Investor by Benjamin Graham

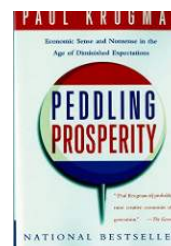
This book discusses the ABCs of investing and the ways in which people can succeed in a tough market. As he discusses diversification and the mindset of an intelligent investor, Benjamin Graham ensures that the reader understands the nuances of the stock market.



Jack Schneider is reading

Peddling Prosperity by Paul Krugman

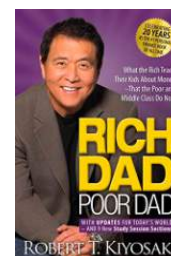
This book looks into the economic developments of the past 30 years. At the same time, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman analyzes how there is no easy answer to hard economic problems.



Esha Singaraju is reading

Rich Dad Poor Dad by Robert Kiyosaki

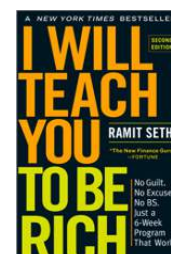
Author Robert Kiyosaki dives into the fundamentals of utilizing money to your advantage and transforming debt into wealth. Robert based the book on tales told to him by one of his role models and shares his key strategies for success. It serves as an introduction to financial literacy and allows people to understand the mindset of a wealthy individual.



Megan You is reading

I Will Teach You to Be Rich by Ramit Sethi

This book is a practical approach delivered with a nonjudgmental style based on the four pillars of personal finance: banking, saving, budgeting, and investing. Author Ramit Sethi offers readers the wealth-building ideas of personal entrepreneurship while simultaneously teaching them the strategy of saving money and spending guilt-free.



WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Congratulations on taking the first step toward financial literacy! By reading this financial literacy toolkit, you have already demonstrated a commitment to improving your financial knowledge and skills. Where do you go from here? The next steps are crucial to turning your newfound knowledge into action and making tangible progress toward your financial goals—whether you want to improve your budgeting skills, start investing, or learn more about managing debt. Check out some resources from FBLA partners that will help you build on this foundation.

The Stock Market Game

Students in the Stock Market Game (SMG) may work individually or in teams of two to five members to build and manage a successful investment portfolio of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds, using a hypothetical \$100,000. They track their investments over the course of 10 weeks, receiving valuable opportunities to practice math, critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills, as well as essential real-life money skills.

You can find more information here: <https://www.fbla.org/StockMarketGame>

LifeSmarts Challenge

LifeSmarts is a national educational competition focused on personal finance and consumer topics. It complements the curriculum already in place in schools and can be used as an activity for classes, student leadership organizations, clubs, and community organizations. This free program, open to students in grades 6–12 in the United States, quizzes students about personal finance, technology and workforce preparation, consumer rights and responsibilities, health and safety, and the environment.

You can find more information here: <https://www.fbla.org/LifeSmarts>

CONCLUSION



Noah Killeen, National Treasurer

No matter what profession you go into after high school, investing in your financial literacy is essential. By learning the fundamentals now, you will be steps ahead of your peers and well on your way to living the life of your dreams!



Natalie Coon, North Central Region Vice President

Financial literacy is critical, no matter where your future may take you. By striving to achieve basic knowledge early on, you are preparing yourself for the freedom of managing your own finances in a way that works for you!



Tamara Kasikovic (NTEC)

Budgeting and discipline are crucial. Create a budget spreadsheet that outlines your income and expenses, and make sure to stick to it. Use apps or tools like Mint or Personal Capital to track your spending, and look for areas where you can cut back and save money.



Nathan Nevenhoven (NCRC)

Starting out early is always the best option. You are never too young to start investing or open savings accounts. By starting early, you are putting your best foot forward toward making your money work for you!



Kesia Osman (NCRC)

Being financially literate will only help you in life. Improving your financial literacy is the first step. Don't be afraid to take it!



Revanth Poondru (NTEC)

Investing in your future starts with managing your money wisely today. Start by setting realistic financial goals, creating a budget, and making smart investment decisions to ensure a secure financial future.



Jack Schneider (NTEC)

Start now! High school and college are fantastic environments to start managing your own financial decisions with the support of knowledgeable people around you.



Esha Singaraju (NTEC)

Investing in the stock market is also investing in yourself. Take measurable risks, always diversify, and be smart with any investment decision.



Kyle Stafford (NCRC)

Learning and maintaining great financial literacy is the key to success. Learn now and be better off in your future! Good luck!



Anika Yadav (NCRC)

Your financial decisions today can help you with your financial future tomorrow. Starting early is the way to go! With these essential skills and an understanding of how to budget, save, and invest, you will become more aware of your financial choices. If it is hard or confusing at first, don't worry—you are not alone, and there are several people here to support you in this journey.



Megan You (NCRC)

By initiating your financial learning today, you are laying a foundation for future success. You do not have to become an expert on the subject now, but having a basic understanding of financial concepts can provide you with significant benefits in the long run.