

A Reality Check

What does it cost to live on your own?

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Grade Level: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11

Subject(s): Interdisciplinary

Duration: It should take about 30 minutes to explain the purpose of the lesson and hand out the assignment. Students should have one week to complete the assignment.

Work can occur at home or in the classroom, depending on the educational program or the student's personal situation. For example, if this lesson is part of an independent living program, the work should proceed in class.

Description: Most teens want to become independent – to live on their own and support themselves financially -- as soon as possible. To prepare for such independence, they need to know the costs.

The worksheet in this lesson plan is adapted from “Raising Yourself: Making The Right Choices” by Sumant Pendharkar, a book on self-parenting for ages 10 – 18. (ISBN 0-9708131-3-9; www.HillviewBooks.com)

Goals:

Students should make a reasonable estimate of what it costs to live independently.

Materials:

- Worksheet (sample and blank attached)
- Calculator
- Bulletin board
- Newspaper (classifieds)
- Internet access

Procedure:

Distribute copies of the worksheet (sample and blank), and instruct the students to fill in the numeric values.

While filling in the worksheet, some students may find it helpful to consult their parents or legal guardians. This can initiate an open dialogue on living expenses, and give perspective about living costs. Such perspective can help the student understand why parents find it so difficult to provide expensive consumer items such as toys and clothing.

The students can look up apartment rental costs in the classifieds section of the local newspaper. If the student wishes to move to a distant city (such as Manhattan, San Francisco, or Hollywood) the student can look up rentals in a newspaper for that city. The school library or local library is a good source for such newspapers.

Although the Internet is a convenient place to look up rental information for any city, it can also be time-consuming. However, if the student really prefers the Internet, a recommended site for rental information (country-wide) is www.apartments.com.

To calculate annual living expenses, instruct the students to multiply their monthly living costs by 12.

Post a few of the filled-in worksheets on the bulletin board, if appropriate. This can serve as a gentle reminder that the good life requires a good wage.

Assessment:

Did the students gain an understanding of what it costs to live independently?

Were they surprised at the expense?

Do they understand that they need a career to generate the necessary income?

This lesson plan should be followed up with a career-selection lesson plan. This plan should integrate the two issues of living expenses and career planning. (The lesson plan for career selection is currently in progress. For more information, please check <http://www.hillviewbooks.com> for the lesson plan or email mgore@hillviewbooks.com to be notified on the availability of the lesson plan.)

Useful Internet Resource:

Recommended site for looking up rental information: www.apartments.com

Student's Name:

Grade:

Teacher:

Date:

A Reality Check: What does it cost to live on your own?

Objective of this exercise: Figure out what it costs to live on your own.

Here is what it will cost you to live on your own per month in a metropolitan city (varies by region) in the US:

Housing (rent) (approximately) \$750

Food \$100

Car \$200

(varies depending on outright purchase, financing, lease, etc.)

Car insurance, maintenance, gas \$150

Health insurance \$100

Entertainment (eating out, movies, concerts)..... \$200

Clothing, personal items \$150

Cable..... \$50

Phone..... \$50

Utilities (water, gas, electricity, etc.)..... \$100

Monthly Total (approximately) \$1,850

(Add extra for emergencies, furnishings, vacations, and so on.)

As an exercise, use the table below to **figure out what it costs to live in your area per month**. Individual needs vary, so figure in your personal preferences.

Category	Amount
Housing (rent/mortgage)	_____
Food	_____
Car	_____
Car insurance, maintenance, gas	_____
Health insurance	_____
Entertainment	_____
(eating out, movies, concerts)	
Clothing, personal items.....	_____
Cable.....	_____
Phone.....	_____
Cell phone, pager.....	_____
Utilities (water, gas, electricity, etc.).....	_____
Internet access.....	_____
Total	_____
Savings for emergencies	_____

* Multiply **Total** by 12 to get annual living expenses = _____