

Needs and Wants

July 21, 2009



When is the last time you asked yourself while shopping – “Do I really need this? Do I need it now?” Do I need this exact one? If you are like most of us, often we act unconsciously and either purchase it or move on – never stopping to think about it. And if we are operating on autopilot, what are we teaching our kids about making good purchase decisions?



Kids live in the moment and are motivated by instant gratification. They need to be taught how to make good decisions. By helping them understand the difference between a need and a want, we empower them to make better and more thoughtful choices. If we can teach them to take one short moment to think first, we have succeeded.

Working with your kids on learning to differentiate a need from a want can also give you the chance to talk about your values. For example, if it's important to you to drive an American-made car or to wear U.S. made clothing—even if it costs a little more you can explain why.

When To Try

Getting dinner ready

What To Do

- Have your kids brainstorm a list of all the things you buy them in a given month. They can write, draw, or cut out pictures from magazines. We suggest writing or gluing each item to a separate sticky note.
- Have them sort each item into the two categories: Needs and Wants.
 - You can get your kids started by asking, “Which of these things do you need to survive? Which ones do you want, but you’re pretty sure you could live without?”
- Create a collage for the “needs” and one for the “wants” and place them in a prominent place, such as on the fridge, somewhere you and your kids will see them.
- Use the two collages when an “I want” wells up in your kids and, together, discuss whether it’s something they “want” or “need.”
- Review the collages once a month and see if they want to move any of the items from one list to the other. Maybe even add some new things!

FAST FACT

Every day more money is printed for Monopoly than the US Treasury.

What You'll Need

- Sticky note pads
- Pens and markers
- Tape/glue
- Magazines
 - Scissors

Talk About It

Were there any surprises? Were there things that the kids felt fit into both categories depending on circumstances?