

Assessment Rubrics

Teen Money Independence

All 8 Units · 44 Lessons · Ages 13–18

Rubric 1

Short Answer Response

Universal

All 44 lessons

Rubric 2

Math / Calculation

Universal

All lessons with math problems

Rubric 3

Discussion Participation

Universal

All 44 lessons — 5 questions each

Rubric 4

Budget Simulation

Lesson 2.3

Unit 2 budget activity

Rubric 5

Personal Finance Plan

Lesson 6.7

Units 1–6 capstone

Rubric 6

Financial Independence Capstone

Lesson 8.6

Full curriculum capstone

Rubric 7

Family Activity Participation

Supplemental

Any of the 18 family activities

Scoring Scale

4 — Mastery	Exceeds expectations. Response is accurate, complete, and demonstrates genuine understanding. Uses correct financial terminology. May include insight beyond the required answer.
3 — Proficient	Meets expectations. Response is accurate and mostly complete. Key concepts addressed correctly with minor gaps. Terminology mostly correct.
2 — Developing	Partially meets expectations. Response shows partial understanding. One or more key elements missing or incorrect. Terminology inconsistent.
1 — Beginning	Does not yet meet expectations. Response is incomplete, inaccurate, or shows fundamental misunderstanding. Significant gaps in required content.

How to use these rubrics

Rubrics 1–3 are universal and apply to every lesson's Lesson Finisher activity. Score each applicable section (Short Answer, Math) independently, then combine. Rubrics 4–6 are specific to the three project-based lessons. Rubric 7 is optional — use it when family activities are graded or formally reviewed. All rubrics use the same 4-point scale so scores can be compared and aggregated across the curriculum. The Printable Answer Key (separate document) provides the specific correct answers; these rubrics provide the quality criteria.

Rubric 1 — Short Answer Response

Applies to: All 44 lessons · Short Answer section of every Lesson Finisher

Each lesson's Lesson Finisher includes one or two short answer questions. Use this rubric to evaluate written responses. The answer key (separate document) identifies what a “strong answer” includes for each specific question — use those descriptions as the content standard; use this rubric as the quality framework.

Criterion	4 — Mastery	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
Content Accuracy Key facts, terms, and concepts are correct	All key facts correct. Financial terms used accurately. No significant errors.	Key facts mostly correct. One minor error or imprecise term. Core concept intact.	One or two significant factual errors. Some confusion about a key term or concept.	Multiple errors or a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept being assessed.
Completeness All required elements are present	All required elements present. Answer key's listed components fully addressed.	Most required elements present. One element missing or addressed only briefly.	Partial response. Two or more required elements missing. Answer key components mostly absent.	Response is substantially incomplete. Only one element present or none at all.
Financial Terminology Correct use of unit vocabulary	Correct financial terms used naturally and accurately throughout. No vague substitutes.	Most key terms used correctly. One term missing or slightly misapplied.	Some terms used, but vaguely or interchangeably. General language replaces specific terms.	No financial terminology used, or terms used incorrectly throughout.
Real-World Connection Response connects concept to a concrete example	Connects concept to a concrete, plausible real-world example or personal application.	Attempts a real-world connection; example is relevant but could be more specific.	Weak or generic connection to real life. Example does not clearly illustrate the concept.	No real-world connection attempted. Response is purely definitional or abstract.

Content Accuracy ___/4 + **Completeness** ___/4 + **Terminology** ___/4 + **Real-World Connection** ___/4
Total ___/16

Refer to the Lesson Finisher Answer Key for specific content standards per lesson.

Rubric 2 — Math / Calculation

Applies to: All lessons with a Math section · Lesson Finisher

Most lessons include a math problem in the Lesson Finisher. This rubric evaluates the process, not just the final answer. A student who sets up the problem correctly and makes a minor arithmetic error should receive more credit than one who arrives at the correct number by guessing. Worked solutions for every math problem appear in the Printable Answer Key.

Criterion	4 — Mastery	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
Problem Setup Identifies knowns, unknowns, and approach	Knowns and unknowns clearly identified. Correct approach or formula selected before calculating.	Approach is correct but setup is incomplete. May skip labeling knowns or writing out the formula.	Partial setup. Some elements identified but formula or approach is incorrect or missing.	No setup shown. Jumps directly to numbers without identifying what is being calculated.
Method / Formula Applies the correct financial calculation	Correct method applied throughout. Formula matches the type of problem (interest, ratio, etc.).	Correct method with one procedural error (e.g., wrong order of operations; uses monthly instead of annual rate).	Partially correct method. Applies a related but incorrect formula, or correct formula incorrectly.	Incorrect or no method. Approach does not match the problem type.
Calculation Accuracy Arithmetic is correct; units are labeled	All calculations correct. Units labeled (% , \$, months, etc.). Result matches the worked solution within rounding.	One arithmetic error. Units labeled. Setup and method are correct; error is in the arithmetic.	Two or more arithmetic errors, or a calculation error that significantly changes the result.	Calculations are absent, entirely incorrect, or cannot be followed.
Interpretation Explains what the result means in financial terms	Explains what the numerical result means in financial terms. States whether it is good/bad/neutral with reasoning.	Brief interpretation present. Restates the number without fully explaining its financial significance.	Result stated without interpretation. Student does not connect the number to a real financial decision.	No interpretation. Answer is a bare number with no context or explanation.

Problem Setup ____/4 + **Method / Formula** ____/4 + **Calculation Accuracy** ____/4 + **Interpretation** ____/4
Total ____/16

Award full credit for correct method + minor arithmetic error. Require worked steps for full credit.

Rubric 3 — Discussion Participation

Applies to: All 44 lessons · 5 discussion questions per lesson

Each lesson includes five discussion questions with model answers. Discussion is oral and facilitated — use this rubric to evaluate the quality of student contributions over the course of a lesson, not individual responses. Score once per lesson (not once per question) to reflect overall participation quality.

Criterion	4 — Mastery	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
Relevance Responses address the question asked	All contributions directly address the question. No tangents. Stays on the financial concept being discussed.	Most contributions relevant. Occasional tangent, but student self-corrects or returns to the topic.	Some contributions relevant. Student frequently misses the question's intent or addresses a related but different topic.	Contributions are largely irrelevant, off-topic, or non-responsive to the question asked.
Use of Lesson Concepts Applies vocabulary and ideas from the lesson	Consistently uses lesson vocabulary and concepts accurately. Shows understanding beyond surface-level recall.	Uses some lesson vocabulary. Concepts mostly correct; occasional vagueness or imprecision.	Limited use of lesson vocabulary. Relies on everyday language where financial terms apply.	Does not use lesson vocabulary or concepts. Responses could apply to any topic.
Reasoning & Evidence Supports claims with explanation	Claims are supported with reasoning, examples, or calculations. Does not state conclusions without support.	Some reasoning present. Claims often stated without full support; examples brief but present.	Conclusions stated without reasoning. Student asserts rather than argues. Little or no supporting evidence.	No reasoning or evidence. Responses are single words, yes/no answers, or expressions of opinion without basis.
Engagement Listens and builds on others' contributions	Actively listens and builds on or respectfully challenges peers' ideas. Advances the discussion.	Listens to peers. Occasionally references a classmate's point, but mostly contributes independently.	Minimal engagement with peers. Responses are independent of what others have said.	Does not engage with the discussion. Participates only when directly called upon.

Relevance ___/4 + Lesson Concepts ___/4 + Reasoning ___/4 + Engagement ___/4 Total ___/16

Score once per lesson. Model answers in the Teacher's Guide show what full-credit responses include.

Rubric 4 — Budget Simulation

Applies to: Lesson 2.3 only · Unit 2 · Week 3

Students build a complete monthly budget from a \$2,000 after-tax income scenario, classify all expenses, choose between zero-based and 50/30/20 methods, and justify trade-offs. Award full credit for a balanced budget with clear reasoning — even if specific spending choices differ from the model. Penalize budgets that omit rent, food, or transportation entirely.

1. Budget Balance

Budget balances exactly (income – all expenses – savings = \$0) or deficit is acknowledged and a correction strategy is stated.
Budget nearly balances. Error is small (<\$50) and clearly unintentional. No correction strategy needed.
Budget omits income, totals are missing, or the concept of balance is not demonstrated.

/4

2. Needs Coverage

Rent, food, and transportation all present with realistic estimates. No essential need omitted.
All three core needs present. One estimate is unrealistic for the scenario (e.g., \$0 food).
Budget omits one or more of rent, food, or transportation without explanation.

/4

3. Needs / Wants Classification

All expenses correctly classified as needs or wants using the lesson framework. No misclassifications.
Most expenses correctly classified. One item is debatable or misclassified with no reasoning.
No classification attempted, or the needs/wants framework is not applied.

/4

4. Method Comparison

Both methods explained accurately and compared. Student correctly identifies which their budget uses and why.
Both methods named. Comparison is brief; one method not fully explained.
Neither method addressed, or description is inaccurate for both.

/4

5. Trade-Off Justification

At least one trade-off explicitly stated and justified. Impact is quantified (e.g., "cutting streaming saves \$17/month").
Trade-off named but not quantified. Reasoning is present but brief.
No trade-off identified. Budget does not reflect any deliberate spending choice.

/4

Balance ___/4 + **Needs Coverage** ___/4 + **Classification** ___/4 + **Method Comparison** ___/4 + **Trade-Off** ___/4

/20

Scenario income: \$2,000/month after-tax. See Lesson 2.3 answer key for model budget breakdown.

Rubric 5 — Personal Finance Plan

Applies to: Lesson 6.7 only · Units 1–6 Capstone

The Lesson 6.7 capstone asks students to produce a written personal financial plan integrating all six prior units. Evaluate each of the five required components independently. Full credit requires all five. Dock points proportionally for missing components — do not award full marks if any component is absent.

1. Savings Goal

Named goal with specific dollar amount, timeline, and monthly savings mechanism stated. E.g., “Save \$1,200 for a laptop by June by automating \$100/month.”

Goal named with dollar amount OR timeline present, but not both. Mechanism vague or absent.

Goal named but no dollar amount, timeline, or mechanism. Too vague to be actionable.

/4

2. Budget Breakdown

Complete budget showing income allocated by category, either in dollar amounts or percentages. Must balance. References 50/30/20 or zero-based method.

Budget present but incomplete. One category missing or totals do not balance.

Budget is a list of expenses without allocation amounts, or does not reference a budgeting method.

/4

3. Emergency Fund Target

Calculates a specific 3- or 6-month target based on their own essential monthly expenses. States where the fund will be held (e.g., HYSA).

Target stated (e.g., “\$3,000”) without showing the calculation or identifying the account type.

Emergency fund mentioned but no target amount given. Response is conceptual only.

/4

4. Credit-Building Plan

States a specific next step for building credit: authorized user, secured card, or student card. Includes timeline and references FICO factors.

Mentions credit building but action is vague (e.g., “get a credit card”) without specifics.

Credit building not addressed, or response only defines credit without a plan.

/4

5. Long-Term Investment

Names a specific investment vehicle (Roth IRA, index fund, or both) with a stated contribution amount. May include a projected outcome using compound interest.

Investment vehicle named without a contribution amount or timeline. Intent without specificity.

Investment not addressed, or response is conceptual (“I should invest”) without a vehicle named.

/4

Component 1 ___/4 + **2** ___/4 + **3** ___/4 + **4** ___/4 + **5** ___/4

/20

Grading note: Each component is scored 4 (full credit), 3 (mostly met), 2–1 (partially met), or 0 (absent). Require all five components for a score above 16/20. Specificity with dollar amounts and timelines is the primary differentiator between 4 and 3.

Rubric 6 — Financial Independence Capstone

Applies to: Lesson 8.6 only · Full Curriculum Capstone

The Lesson 8.6 capstone is the final deliverable of the entire 12-week curriculum. It requires five distinct components. Unlike earlier lessons, the capstone is not about demonstrating knowledge of a topic — it is about applying the entire curriculum to the student's actual life. Vague answers (“I want to save more”) do not receive full credit regardless of how earnest they are. Specificity is the standard.

1. SMART Goals (1/3/5/10 yr)

Four goals present (1, 3, 5, and 10 years). Each is Specific (named goal + dollar amount), Measurable (trackable), Achievable (realistic), and Time-bound (date stated).

Two or three goals present. One or two goals are vague or missing a date or dollar amount. The SMART format is attempted but not fully applied.

One or no goals. Goals are aspirational without specific amounts, dates, or mechanisms. SMART format not applied.

/4

2. Net Worth Statement

Lists all assets (cash, savings, property, investment accounts) and all debts (loans, credit card balances). Calculates assets – debts = net worth. Negative net worth acknowledged without distress — trajectory discussed.

Assets or debts listed but not both. Net worth not calculated, or calculation shown without interpretation of what it means.

Net worth not addressed, or only one item listed. No calculation shown.

/4

3. First Action (within 2 weeks)

Names one specific, concrete financial action to complete within 2 weeks. Must be actionable today: open an account, set up a transfer, add an authorized user, file for a credit report.

Action named but vague (e.g., “start saving”) or too large to complete in 2 weeks. Intent is present; specificity is not.

No first action identified, or action is a re-statement of a goal rather than an immediate next step.

/4

4. Adulthood Checklist

At least 3 items from the Adulthood Checklist identified as priorities for the next 12 months. Each item has a stated reason for prioritization and a rough timeline.

3 items identified but without reasoning or timeline. Or 1–2 items with strong reasoning.

Checklist not completed, or fewer than 2 items identified without reasoning.

/4

5. Letter to Future Me

Letter is written in first person, addresses Future Self at a specific date (5 years out), references at least two financial commitments made in this plan, and acknowledges the consequence of not following through.

Letter written but missing a specific date, or commitments are vague. Personal and earnest but lacking the specificity of a real commitment.

Letter not written, or consists of one or two sentences. Does not reference the financial plan or make specific commitments.

/4

Component 1 ___/4 + **2** ___/4 + **3** ___/4 + **4** ___/4 + **5** ___/4

/20

Facilitation note: The Letter to Future Me and Adulting Checklist are the most emotionally resonant components for most students. Give adequate quiet time for both. The letter is most valuable if treated as a real sealed document — not a class exercise. Students who rush the letter should be asked: “Would you actually send this to yourself? Does it say something you'd be proud of in 5 years?”

Rubric 7 — Family Activity Participation

Applies to: Supplemental · Any of the 18 Family Activities

This rubric is optional — use it when family activities are formally graded or when students are submitting a reflection or debrief response. The activities are designed to be enjoyable first; this rubric should reinforce learning without turning a game into a high-stakes assessment. Score on participation quality, not on winning.

Criterion	4 — Mastery	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
Engagement Active participation throughout the activity	Fully engaged throughout. Completes all steps. Contributes energy and focus to the activity.	Mostly engaged. Completes most steps. One period of disengagement but returns to task.	Partially engaged. Completes some steps but stops early, skips steps, or is frequently distracted.	Minimal engagement. Does not complete the activity or is disengaged throughout.
Lesson Connection Applies financial concepts from the relevant unit	Clearly applies lesson concepts during the activity and debrief. Names relevant terms correctly.	Uses lesson concepts with minor imprecision. Connection to lesson is present but brief.	Limited connection to lesson concepts. Completes the activity mechanically without financial reasoning.	Does not connect the activity to lesson content. Treats it as a game without financial context.
Debrief Quality Reflective response to debrief questions	Debrief answers are thoughtful and specific. References what happened in the activity as evidence.	Debrief answers are present and relevant. Responses are brief but connected to the activity.	Debrief answers are generic or could apply to any activity. Not specific to what was experienced.	Debrief questions not answered, or responses are one word / one sentence with no reasoning.

Engagement ___/4 + Lesson Connection ___/4 + Debrief Quality ___/4 Total ___/12

Maximum 12 points per activity. Optional — weight as appropriate for your grading context.

Grade Calculation Guide

The table below shows a suggested weighting scheme for instructors who assign letter grades. Adjust weights to match your program's assessment philosophy. All rubrics use a 4-point scale, making scores directly comparable.

Lesson Finisher — Short Answer

Rubric 1

43
16 pts
30%

Lesson Finisher — Math / Calculation

Rubric 2

~35
16 pts
25%

Discussion Participation

Rubric 3

43
16 pts
20%

Budget Simulation (Lesson 2.3)

Rubric 4

1
20 pts
8%

Personal Finance Plan (Lesson 6.7)

Rubric 5

1
20 pts
10%

Financial Independence Capstone (8.6)

Rubric 6

1
20 pts
7%

Family Activities (optional)

Rubric 7

Up to 17
12 pts
—

Letter Grade Conversion (4-point scale)