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The pay-me game

In this activity pupils will exchange play money to understand the cost of their energy habits. This activity takes about 20–30 minutes.

You will need

- Two envelopes, one labelled 'ME' and one labelled 'UTILITY'
- Play money (see below), £100 per pupil
- A copy of the pay-me game questions

Steps

1

Cut out the money sheets. Each pupil should have £100 made up of 20 x £1, 10 x £5, and 3 x £10.

2

Give each student one 'ME' envelope and one 'UTILITY' envelope.

3

Inform pupils that they have just been paid £100 and that whatever they and their family don't spend on energy at home can be used to buy the things they really want, such as MP3 players and mobile phones. Read each question to the group. Depending on their answers, the pupils will put the required amount of money in either their 'ME' envelope or in their 'UTILITY' envelope. Students who run out of money before the end of the game may borrow from their 'ME' envelopes to pay the utility bill.

4

At the end of the game, count the money in each envelope to show your pupils how much their energy habits are costing them. Discuss how pupils could get more in their 'ME' envelopes.

Analysis/ discussion

Discuss the 'whys' of the questions with your pupils before you begin the activity. This will give them a better understanding of their energy practices. Stress to the pupils that this is a game designed to show them how much energy they really use, so it is best if they answer the questions honestly.

Utility companies produce pamphlets with energy-saving tips. You could get copies for your pupils to take home as a follow-up to this activity. (Go to the 'Further information' section of this resource for details on whom to contact.)



The pay-me game questions

- 1 Do you have an electric blanket?**
YES: Pay UTILITY envelope £2
NO: Pay ME envelope £2

Electric blankets cost about 8 pence a night or £2.40 a month per person. Using warm pyjamas and blankets saves the most energy. But if your room is still too cold at night it costs less to use an electric blanket than to heat up the whole room.

- 2 Have your parents ever heated the kitchen with the stove or oven?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £10
NO: Pay ME £10

If you ever see someone doing this you should tell him or her that it is dangerous, expensive and doesn't work very well.

- 3 Do you take baths?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £6

A bath costs at least 10 pence. In a month that's £3 per person.

- 4 Do you take showers that take less than five minutes?**
YES: Pay ME £5

A shower that takes less than five minutes will use less than 6 pence worth of hot water.

- 5 How many members of your family take showers that last more than five minutes?**

Pay UTILITY £5 for each person in your family who does this

- 6 Do you always (and we mean always) turn off the lights every time you leave a room?**
YES: Pay ME £5
NO: Pay UTILITY £5

An average electricity bill for lights alone is £9 a month.

- 7 Are your clothes dried in a tumble dryer?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £13
NO: Pay ME £13

It costs about 80 pence an hour to operate a tumble dryer. This can get very expensive after a few loads of clothes. Cleaning the filters after each load is dried and drying one load after another so the drum doesn't have to be reheated for each load will save money.

- 8 Do you sleep in a water bed?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £20

Keep the water bed below 29 °C and keep the mattress covered at all times to save money. There are special electric blankets that you can put on top of your water bed which keep you warm without having to heat up all the water. These electric blankets can save a lot of money.



The pay-me game questions continued

- 9 In the summer are the curtains in your home closed to keep out the heat?**
YES: Pay ME £10
NO: Pay UTILITY £5

Closing curtains and pulling down blinds keeps sunlight and warm air from getting into your house. This keeps your house much cooler.

- 10 Do you use a dishwasher to wash your dishes without opening the door to dry the dishes?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £5
NO: Pay ME £3

If you turn the drying cycle off and open the door to let the dishes dry you can pay yourself £2.

- 11 Do you have more than one refrigerator or freezer in your house?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £12 for a second refrigerator or freezer

Each extra refrigerator costs about £12 a month – that's £144 a year!

- 12 Is your refrigerator opened more than six times a day?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £2 for each person who opens the door
NO: Pay ME £5

It costs about 3 pence every time the door is opened.

- 13 Do you use a hair dryer?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £3
NO: Pay ME £3

It costs about 8 pence every time you use a hair dryer.

- 14 Do you listen to the radio or use a video recorder?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £2
NO: Pay ME £1

It costs the average household about £2.30 a month to use these.

- 15 Do you play computer games?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £4
NO: Pay ME £2

Even though most computer games are electronic and use a small amount of electricity they are usually played for many hours and the costs soon add up.

- 16 Do you have an electric toothbrush?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £1

- 17 Do you have an electric clock?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £1
NO: Pay ME £1

A wind-up clock doesn't use electricity.

- 18 Do you use an electric can-opener?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £1
NO: Pay ME £1

A good hand-operated can-opener works well for most people.



The pay-me game questions continued

- 19 Do you use a portable electric heater in winter?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £30
NO: Pay ME £10

In general, portable heaters use energy inefficiently. If you're the only one who's cold consider putting on an extra sweater or pair of socks instead of using the heater to warm up your room.

- 20 Does your freezer have an ice-maker?**
YES: Pay UTILITY £3

It is cheaper to make ice cubes with ice-cube trays in your freezer.

Conclusion

Add up the money in each envelope, but don't count any money that is in your hand.

Ask: Who has the most money in his or her 'ME' envelope?

Who has the most money in his or her 'UTILITY' envelope?

Discuss how pupils could get more in their 'ME' envelopes. (Use the information provided with the questions.)

If this was real money, and pupils could keep any money that they could save, what would they do with it?

