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# ake Yourself Scarce

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## Overview


**Topic:** Economics, Scarcity. Students explore their own economic needs and wants and learn about how scarcity of resources affects them and others, including animals. A class project compiling individual student information is graphed to show how many people can be affected by scarcity.

## Length of Lesson

1 hour for content lesson  
1 hour for lesson on spreadsheet compilation

## Instructional Video/Technology

*Economics: The Production, Distribution and Consumption of Goods and Services #3, Needs and Wants* 

*Econ and Me #1, Scarcity* 

Word processing software and compatible spreadsheet software

Computer projection screen to display spreadsheet for instruction

Overhead projector

## Learning Objectives

The students will be able to:

- explain how scarcity influences economic decision making (Va. SOLs History and Social Science 3.8)
- communicate their economic needs and wants through application software (Va. SOLs English 3.7, 3.8 and Computer Technology 5.2, 5.4)
- integrate a simple class graph of survey data into a word processing document (Va. SOL Math 3.21, 3.22 and Computer Technology 5.2, 5.3, 5.4)

## Materials

- choices worksheet (attached)
- “special pencils or pens” for previewing simulation of scarcity (fewer than number of students in class)
- paper

## Previewing Activities

1. Ask the class to brainstorm human needs versus wants (to assess the students’ current understanding of true needs).
2. Pass out the special materials (pens or pencils) to be used in the lesson, but skip several students because of a “scarcity” of materials. The teacher should make a big deal about how nice the pens/pencils are and how special it is to have them to use. Respond to queries about not having enough materials by saying that many people wanted the same pens/pencils and so there were not enough left for the whole class. Some students will just have to watch their classmates use their materials.

## Focus for Viewing

Tell students: We are going to learn about what economics is and about needs, wants and scarcity. First,



**Thirteen** WVNET

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we will look at a definition of economics. We will see a short section of a video about economics. Focus on how this segment defines economics. Afterward, we will put together ideas from the video on the board.

### **NOTE TO THE TEACHER** **Pause vs. Stop**

When using a video interactively with students, teachers need to decide when to use **PAUSE** and when to use **STOP**. **PAUSE** the video when the anticipated discussion or activity will take less than two minutes. **STOP** for longer periods. Pausing for too long at one time can cause video heads on the VCR to become clogged which may require cleaning to correct.

### **Viewing Activities**

**1. Focus:** How do we define “economics?” Listen for several things that economics includes. **START** the video *Economics #3* with the introduction. **STOP** at “Economics is the science of how people use resources to satisfy their needs and wants.” Ask the students to name several things that economics is about. List them on the board:

- money
- poor versus rich
- jobs
- products
- food we grow and eat
- things we make

Then have students piece together a definition of economics. (Economics is the science of how people use resources to satisfy their needs and wants.) Instruct students to take these notes on their paper with their very special writing tools.

**2. Focus:** The next segment of the tape tells about the needs that all humans have to meet in order to survive. I want you to watch and listen carefully in order to name each need. **RESUME** video. **PAUSE** at the frame of the close-up on water at a treatment plant after the statement, “This is a big commitment of resources.” Ask: The first basic human need lists two things. What are they? (Food and Clean water) Record on the board.

**3. Focus:** Remind students to look for the second basic human need. **RESUME** video. **PAUSE** at the frame of kids going in the front door of the house after the statement, “For most of us this means a home to live in.” Ask: What is the second need? (Shelter) Record on the board.

**4. Focus:** Remind students to look for the third basic human need. **RESUME** video. **PAUSE** at the frame of 3 women walking together after “Without clothing it would be very difficult to live in areas of the world where it gets very cold.” What is the third need? (Clothing) Record on the board.

**5. Focus:** Now we are going to see if we named got all of the basic human needs. **RESUME** video. **STOP** at the frame which reviews the three needs on the screen. Ask: Did we name the three basic needs?

1. Food and Clean Water
2. Shelter
3. Clothing

**6.** Discuss what might happen when there is not enough of a resource for all of the people who need it. What might this be called? (Scarcity)

**7.** Along with the teacher, students should have completed the notes on the three basic needs with the “special” writing tool. Discuss how those who did not have the materials felt about being left out. (It is more dramatic if the teacher has made a big deal about how nice the pens/pencils are and how special it is to have them to use.) Have students conclude that wants can create a scarcity just as needs can.

**8. Focus:** Now we are going to look at another segment about some children who have an economic problem. They have a problem of scarcity. Listen and look in this clip to see if you can find out what their scarcity problems are (they have two), and then see if you can define scarcity. **START Econ and Me #1** at the beginning of the scene where the boy brings in three hats, but four children want one. **PAUSE** at frame of the mother when she says, “Well, you’re going to have to make a choice. There just isn’t enough space for you to take over this room too.” Ask students what the two economic problems are that the children have?

1. Scarcity of hats (four children, three hats)
2. Scarcity of space (They want to have a place to play; the mother wants the living room for company)

**7. Focus: FAST FORWARD** to where the man (Econ) drops the blue screen. Ask students to review what the economic problems are. **RESUME** the video. **STOP** after the scarcities of hats and space have been drawn at the frame of the word “scarcity” with dots over it. Ask: Did we name the economic problems the children faced? What does scarcity mean? (when you have more wants or needs than resources) What do you do when you have a scarcity problem? (you have to make a choice)

### Post-Viewing Activities

1. When we have a scarcity, we have to make choices. Work through the choices worksheet as a group with an overhead and then individually with choices made that very day (e.g.: clothing, breakfast, with whom to play at recess)
2. Have students enter their personal data regarding which choice they received for lunch (first, second or third) into a class spreadsheet. Project the class spreadsheet and create a class graph to show whose wants were not met in a situation of scarcity in the school cafeteria.
3. As a class, visit Internet sites which discuss scarcity issues in society such as homelessness, famine and economic and environmental deprivation. Examples include:
  - <<http://www.earthsystems.org/1.html>>
  - <<http://www.cfn.cs.dal.ca/Libraries/HCRL/CommunityDB/CRCS.html>>
  - <<http://www.gil.com.au/va.salvos/corps.html>>

### Assessment

Have students chart lunch choices in the morning and what they actually get after lunch for one week. Have them use a spreadsheet and graph the results.

Have students survey students during a lunch period to see how many do not get their first entree choice because there is scarcity. Have them compile the results in a spreadsheet and graph the data.

### Action Plan

1. Have students compile their lunch choice survey results, prepare a case argument, and present it to the food services manager.
2. Have the students create a chart of a pet’s needs and wants, similar to the chart completed with personal information in class. Students should identify which listed items are needs and which are wants.
3. Use the Internet to research locations where humans do not necessarily have their basic needs met. Research and compile results of why this happens in these places.
  - Compare the economic situations of various countries and the homeless and/or hunger figures for those countries.
  - Explore of what choices a person might make when they have to choose between basic human needs. For example, people who have too little money to purchase food and pay for a place to live and have to buy food to eat rather than have a home in which to live. This activity could result in a very dramatic discussion if you integrate the use of the internet and research to show that there are people who have to make these choices.
  - Visits a homeless shelter.
  - Have a person who has been or is homeless visit the class to talk about how they came to be in that position.
  - Have a government official visit the class to discuss the homeless and what students can do in their community to help the homeless.

### Extensions

**Language Arts and Technology:** Have the students write a paper explaining the results of the graphing activity with a graph inserted in a word processing document. Have them include an argument for why

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this situation (scarcity at lunch time) can't be allowed to continue.

**Math:** Figure percentage of students who did not get their first choice in lunch

**Environmental Science:**

- “Oh Deer” from Project Wild is a great lesson to use with children showing the “economic” cycle in nature of the use of resources, growth in population and then the decline in population based on too few resources.
- The Lorax is a wonderful book for elementary classes which discusses the devastation and destruction of natural resources and the effect on animals. This story is also available in movie format.
- Study draught in various places worldwide and how it affects food production.

**Social Studies:**

- Create a class map comparing and contrasting the famine situation in various parts of the world.
- Explore a particular area of the world with a serious famine problem and look at the economic condition of the area.

# Making Choices

