

Little Money Lessons for Little People

By [Denise Schipani](#) Sent: Monday August 02, 2010



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I like to treat my five- and seven-year-old sons, but I don't want them to believe Silly Bandz fall from heaven, or that my wallet is a magic dollar dispenser. So every time they troll the grocery store with me or get tempted by the snacks for sale at summer camp, I try to impart little money lessons—and they're actually adding up.

- **Dollars and sense.** Candy and ice cream at day camp are usually a dollar or less, and my sons didn't understand why I was reluctant to just hand over a buck or two. So I totted it up for them: \$1 per boy, per day, comes to \$10 a week. That number produced newfound respect for how much their snacks really cost. And respect is where responsible spending starts.
- **Size matters.** The other day, I tossed a loaf of raisin bread in the grocery cart, remarking that it cost \$3.50 a loaf. My seven-year-old piped up: "The Subway sandwich at camp is \$3.50." Ding! "That's one sandwich," I said. "This is a whole loaf of bread—breakfast for you and your brother all week." And he got it. I could see him mentally comparing the idea of all those breakfasts against a measly six-inch hero.

- **No matter how you slice it...** I sometimes let the kids buy pizza (\$2 a slice)—but I usually stop them at one slice (they want more for competition's sake with their friends, not because they're hungry). I tell them: \$2 may not be much money, but \$4 is too much for a lunch they won't finish, especially when I have perfectly good food at home. I have to repeat myself (often!), but the other day I heard my older son say to the little guy, "You don't need two slices of pizza for lunch, you know."

Of course, I get regular reminders that this is a big learning curve for them—and me. Yesterday was supposed to be Carnival Day at camp, and I gave the kids \$5 for the games and activities. Well, the carnival was postponed due to bad weather, but guess who spent the \$5 on candy anyway? Sigh. One step forward, two steps back.

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