

SOCIAL STUDIES · GRADES 2–5

World Currencies

Money around the world

What is currency?

CURRENCY just means the kind of money a country uses. Most countries have their own — though some share. Each currency has a name (like 'pound' or 'dollar') and a symbol (like £ or \$). They all do the same job — let people buy and sell things — but they look different and have different values.

Currencies you'll hear about

Currency	Symbol	Used in
US Dollar	\$	United States, Ecuador, Zimbabwe, used worldwide for trade
Euro	€	20 European countries — France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Ireland, etc.
British Pound	£	United Kingdom (and historically much of the Commonwealth)
Japanese Yen	¥	Japan
Chinese Yuan	¥	China (also written as ¥ — yes, same symbol as yen!)
Indian Rupee	₹	India
Australian Dollar	A\$	Australia
Canadian Dollar	C\$	Canada



Currency	Symbol	Used in
Mexican Peso	Mex\$	Mexico
Brazilian Real	R\$	Brazil
South African Rand	R	South Africa
Swiss Franc	CHF	Switzerland

Exchange rates explained simply

An EXCHANGE RATE tells you how much of one currency you get for another. Example: If 1 US dollar = 80 Japanese yen, and you have \$10, you can swap it for 800 yen. Exchange rates change every day depending on lots of things — how strong each country's economy is, demand for things made there, even the news. A pound today might be worth a different number of dollars from a pound last week.

Why money looks different

<p>It shows national identity</p> <p>Most countries put famous people, important buildings, animals or scenery on their money. It's a way to celebrate the country.</p>	<p>Different sizes and colours</p> <p>Some currencies use different sizes for different values. Australian notes are made of plastic, not paper, so they last longer and don't fall apart in the wash.</p>
<p>Hidden security features</p> <p>Real money has special features to stop people copying it — watermarks, hidden threads, holograms, special inks that change colour. These are built in so you can spot fakes.</p>	<p>Coins last longer than notes</p> <p>A coin lasts about 30 years. A paper note lasts about 18 months. That's why coins are used for smaller, everyday amounts that change hands a lot.</p>

Investigation activities

1. If you visited five countries on a trip, which currencies would you need? Pick five countries and find out.
2. Look at a banknote (or a picture of one). Whose face is on it? Why might that person be there?
3. Why do you think some countries chose to share a currency (the Euro) instead of keeping their own?
4. If 1 British pound = 1.25 US dollars, how many dollars would you get for 100 pounds?



Discussion

Money is just paper or metal — it doesn't have value by itself. It works because EVERYONE AGREES it's worth something. If a shop refuses to take pounds in London, the system breaks down. So money depends on TRUST. That's a powerful idea.

