THE ADULTING COURSE

First Money & First Job Kit

A ready-to-teach homeschool unit on first paychecks, banking, and first jobs

Print it. Open it. Teach it this week — no prep required.

Parent Edition · For teens ages 12–17

How to use this kit

This kit turns four essential money-and-work skills into short, ready-to-teach lessons. You don't need a finance background — everything your teen needs to know is written out, and every lesson comes with a Parent Answer Key so you can teach it confidently.

The four lessons

- Lesson 1 — Decoding a Paycheck: why the check is smaller than expected, and what every line means.
- Lesson 2 — The First Bank Account: opening one, and dodging the fees that quietly drain it.
- Lesson 3 — Their First $200: a simple, teen-proof plan so early money doesn't vanish.
- Lesson 4 — Landing the First Job: applications, a resume with no experience, and interviews.

Suggested pace

One lesson per sitting, about 20–30 minutes each — or spread a lesson across two short 10-minute conversations.

Do the whole kit in a week, or one lesson a week for a month. There's no wrong speed.

Each lesson ends with a short activity and a few discussion questions. The Parent Answer Key follows every lesson.

Lesson 1 — Decoding a Paycheck

Goal: your teen can look at a real pay stub and explain, line by line, where the money went.

The big idea: gross vs. net

Gross pay is the number you earn before anything is taken out — hours worked times the hourly rate. Net pay (also called "take-home pay") is what actually lands in the bank after deductions. The gap between them surprises almost every first-time worker.

If your teen works 20 hours at $12/hour, gross pay is $240. But the check might read closer to $210. Where did the rest go? That's what the deductions section explains.

What's taken out, and why

Federal income tax

Money sent to the federal government based on how much you earn and the info on your W-4 form. Many teens who don't earn much get some or all of this back when they file a tax return.

State income tax

The same idea for your state — though some states have no income tax at all.

FICA (Social Security + Medicare)

FICA is a flat payroll tax split into two parts: Social Security (6.2%) and Medicare (1.45%) — about 7.65% of gross pay together. Unlike income tax, this doesn't come back at tax time. It funds retirement and health programs, and paying in now builds your future Social Security record.

> **The one-sentence version to teach**
>
> "Your paycheck shrinks because the government takes income tax (some of which you may get back) and FICA (which you don't) — so always plan around your take-home number, not your gross."

Read a real pay stub

Here's a sample stub for a teen who worked 20 hours at $12.00/hour. Walk through each line together.

Line item	Amount	What it means
Gross pay (20 hrs × $12.00)	$240.00	Earned before deductions
Federal income tax	−$12.00	To the federal government
State income tax	−$5.00	To your state (may be $0)
Social Security (6.2%)	−$14.88	FICA — retirement system
Medicare (1.45%)	−$3.48	FICA — health program
Net pay (take-home)	$204.64	What hits the bank

Activity: mark up the stub

1. On the sample stub above, have your teen circle the gross pay and underline the net pay.
2. Add up the four deductions. Do they equal the difference between gross and net? (They should: $35.36.)
3. Ask: if you wanted $300 of take-home pay, roughly how many hours would you need to work? (About 29 — because ~15% comes out.)

Discussion questions

- Which deduction do you get some of back at tax time, and which do you not?
- Why is it risky to plan a purchase around your gross pay instead of take-home?
- What's one thing you'd do differently now that you know about FICA?

Parent Answer Key — Lesson 1

Gross vs. net: gross = before deductions; net = take-home after deductions.
You may get federal (and state) income tax back when you file; FICA you don't get back.
FICA ≈ 7.65% of gross (6.2% Social Security + 1.45% Medicare).
Rule of thumb for a first job: take-home is roughly 85% of gross (varies by state and income).

Lesson 2 — The First Bank Account

Goal: your teen can open the right account and avoid the fees that quietly eat a small balance.

Checking vs. savings

A checking account is for money that moves — spending, a debit card, paying for things. A savings account is for money that sits and grows a little interest. Most people want both: checking for day-to-day, savings for goals and emergencies.

How to open one

Under 18, a teen usually opens a joint account with a parent. You'll typically need a photo ID or birth certificate, a Social Security number, and a small opening deposit. Credit unions and "student" or "teen" checking accounts are often the best fit — they tend to have the fewest fees.

The fees that drain an account

Overdraft fee

Charged when you spend more than you have — often around $35 for a single slip. The fix: turn OFF overdraft coverage so a card just gets declined instead of triggering a fee.

Monthly maintenance / minimum balance fee

Some accounts charge a monthly fee unless you keep a minimum balance. For a teen, choose an account with no monthly fee and no minimum.

Out-of-network ATM fee

Using another bank's ATM can cost $3–$5 each way. Stick to your own bank's ATMs.

> **The rule to teach**
> "Pick an account with no monthly fee, no minimum balance, and overdraft turned off. Those three choices protect a small balance from getting nibbled to zero."

Debit vs. credit (quick contrast)

A debit card spends money you already have — it pulls straight from checking. A credit card borrows money you pay back later, and costs a lot in interest if you don't pay in full. Lesson 2 is about debit; credit gets its own lesson in the full course.

Debit card safety

- Never share the card number, PIN, or the 3-digit code on the back.
- Check the account weekly — catching a wrong charge early makes it easy to fix.
- A real bank will never text or call asking for your PIN or full card number. That's a scam.

Activity: compare three accounts

Look up three real "teen" or "student" checking accounts (two banks and one credit union). Fill in the table and pick a winner.

What to check	Account A	Account B	Account C
Monthly fee?			
Minimum balance?			

What to check	Account A	Account B	Account C
ATM network size			
Overdraft can be turned off?			
Our pick & why			

Parent Answer Key — Lesson 2

Best-fit teen account: no monthly fee, no minimum balance, overdraft OFF, large fee-free ATM network.

Checking = money that moves; savings = money that grows.

Overdraft fees (~$35) are the biggest avoidable drain — declining a card is free; overdrawing is not.

Debit spends your money; credit borrows it. This lesson stays on debit.

Lesson 3 — Their First $200

Goal: your teen has a simple, repeatable plan so early money doesn't disappear by the weekend.

The problem with a first paycheck

Money with no plan gets spent — not on anything big, just a little at a time until it's gone. The fix isn't a complicated budget. It's deciding what each dollar is for before it arrives.

A teen-proof split: Save / Spend / Give

Divide every paycheck into three buckets the moment it lands. A simple starting split is 50% spend, 40% save, 10% give — but the exact numbers matter less than the habit of splitting first.

Bucket	Share of $200	What it's for
Spend	$100	Day-to-day: food out, fun, small wants
Save	$80	A goal (phone, car, laptop) + a small emergency cushion
Give	$20	Church, a cause, a gift for someone

Sinking funds: saving for a known expense

A sinking fund is money set aside a little at a time for something you know is coming — a $120 pair of cleats, a concert ticket, car insurance. Instead of one painful hit, you save a slice each paycheck. Teach your teen to name their savings: not just "savings," but "$300 for a laptop by December."

Making a paycheck last

- Split the money the day it arrives, not at the end of the week.
- Keep "spend" money separate from "save" money — a second account or even an envelope works.
- Wait 24 hours before any purchase over $30. Most impulse buys don't survive a day.

Activity: budget a sample month

Your teen earns $200 twice this month ($400 total). Fill in a plan using the three buckets, then list one specific savings goal and its deadline.

Category	This month's plan	Notes
Spend	$	What will it realistically go to?
Save	$	Toward which goal?
Give	$	To whom or what?
Savings goal		Amount + deadline

Parent Answer Key — Lesson 3

The habit that matters: split the paycheck into buckets the day it arrives.

A workable starter split is 50% spend / 40% save / 10% give — adjust to your family's values.

A sinking fund = saving a slice each paycheck for a known future cost.

Named goals with deadlines get funded; a vague "savings" account rarely does.

Lesson 4 — Landing the First Job

Goal: your teen can find an opening, apply, build a first resume, and handle a basic interview.

Where to look

First jobs usually come from three places: businesses your teen already visits (they may hire teens), people you know (a word from a neighbor or family friend goes a long way), and online listings (Indeed, local Facebook groups, company "careers" pages). Applying in person still works well for local shops and restaurants.

Filling out an application

- Have the basics ready: address, phone, email, school, and availability (which days/hours).
- List two references — an adult who isn't family (coach, teacher, family friend) works well. Ask them first.
- Fill out every field neatly; "N/A" is better than a blank.

A resume with no experience

No job history yet? A resume can still shine by showing responsibility. Use this simple structure:

1. Name and contact info at the top (a professional email — not xXgamerXx@...).
2. A one-line objective: "Reliable, hard-working student seeking a first part-time role."
3. "Experience" — babysitting, lawn care, volunteering, 4-H, a paper route, helping in a family business.
4. Skills — punctual, comfortable with customers, good with math, quick learner.
5. Education — school and grade level, plus any honors.

Interview basics

Arrive five minutes early, dress a notch nicer than the job requires, put the phone away, make eye contact, and offer a firm handshake. It's fine to be nervous — employers hiring teens expect it. What they're really checking: are you polite, reliable, and coachable?

Common questions — and strong answers

They ask	A strong answer sounds like
Tell me about yourself.	A sentence on school, one on a responsibility you handle, one on why you want to work.
Why do you want this job?	Something specific and honest: "I want to earn and save for a car, and I like that this is a team."
What's a weakness?	A real one plus how you manage it: "I'm quiet at first, so I make a point to ask questions."
When can you work?	Know your real availability before you walk in.

Being a good employee (keeping the job)

- Show up on time — early is on time. It's the #1 thing that gets teens kept or let go.
- If you're sick, call (don't text) as early as possible and give as much notice as you can.
- When you leave a job, give about two weeks' notice — you'll want the reference later.

Activity: resume + mock interview

1. Have your teen write a one-page resume using the structure above.

2. Run a 5-question mock interview (use the table). You play the manager; give one piece of kind feedback after.

Parent Answer Key — Lesson 4

First jobs come from places they frequent, people you know, and online listings.
A no-experience resume leans on responsibility: babysitting, chores, volunteering, reliability.
Interviews test politeness, reliability, and coachability more than skills.
Punctuality keeps the job; calling in (not texting) and two weeks' notice protect the reference.

Parent quick-start guide

Everything you need to teach this kit with confidence, on one page.

A simple week-long plan

Day	Lesson	Time
Monday	Lesson 1 — Decoding a Paycheck	25 min
Tuesday	Lesson 2 — The First Bank Account	25 min
Wednesday	Lesson 3 — Their First $200	20 min
Thursday	Lesson 4 — Landing the First Job (part 1)	20 min
Friday	Lesson 4 activity — resume + mock interview	30 min

How to mark it complete

- Each lesson is "done" when your teen finishes the activity and can answer the discussion questions in their own words.
- For a homeschool record, log it as part of a Personal Finance / Life Skills elective. (The full Adulting Course includes a 12-module version with a high-school credit rubric.)

Where this fits

This kit is the money-and-work starter. The full Adulting Course expands it into a complete semester life-skills elective — credit, renting, insurance, healthcare, cooking, consumer skills, and more — with a parent teaching guide and a credit rubric.