

What did they learn?

I did not have enough money to meet my expenses is a common response of the participants after completing the **Welcome to the Real World! Simulation**. Some finish with a positive checking account balance, while others have a negative balance. Participants must understand that a negative balance (overdrawn account) is not permitted in real life! When time allows, they are encouraged to go back and review their decisions and make the necessary changes to live within their income. In the wrap-up session following the simulation, participants evaluate how well they did spending their money. If they had a negative balance, they consider the choices they made and discuss what alternatives might be taken.

Alternatives might include:

- Selecting a different occupation.
- Getting more education/training, thus improving earning potential.
- Balancing expenses to income by:
 - Making wiser consumer choices.
 - Reducing spending.
 - Developing a more realistic spending plan.

Who developed this curriculum? How can I get more information about this program?

The University of Illinois Extension developed **Welcome to the Real World!** from a similar activity sponsored by the Illinois Business and Professional Women's organization. This curriculum has been adapted for use in Connecticut and is appropriate for the classroom as well as a workshop for youth organizations. The material is very flexible and can be used in various ways such as a 3-hour workshop using just the simulation experience or in a multi-session format using both the curriculum and simulation.

For more information about this and other financial literacy education efforts for youth and adults, contact:

Faye Griffiths-Smith
Associate Extension Educator
Family Economics and Resource Management
University of Connecticut
Cooperative Extension System
305 Skiff Street
North Haven, CT 06473

Phone: 203.407.3160
Fax: 203.407.3176
faye.griffiths-smith@uconn.edu

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Gregory J. Weidemann, Director, Cooperative Extension System, University of Connecticut, Storrs. An Equal opportunity program provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, Stop Code 9410, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202)720-5964.

Every effort will be made to provide special accommodation if requested at least 14 days in advance.



Welcome to the Real World, Connecticut Edition!

A Career Exploration, Decision Making
and Money Management Program

Adapted for use in Connecticut by:



From curriculum developed by:



Welcome to the Real World, Connecticut Edition!

All my expenses cost more than I ever really thought!

It makes me want to save just in case of unexpected incidents.

It helped me learn how to balance my money more.

I realize that I definitely need a college education to live well.

These are just a few comments expressed by young people who have participated in the **Welcome to the Real World!** Simulation.

What is the Welcome to the Real World! Program?

Career Exploration Expenditure Decision Making Money Management Choice Evaluation

The program is an active, hands-on activity which gives young people the opportunity to explore career opportunities and make life-style and budget choices similar to those adults face on a daily basis.

In this simulation of the real world, participants are to assume that they are single, 25 years old and have completed basic educational requirements for their chosen career. They live on their own and are independent with no financial support from family or others.

The participants explore potential careers or occupations that they would like to pursue in the future. After they choose an occupation, they receive a monthly salary for that occupation. They then proceed through the *Real World* simulation, deducting taxes, determining a savings amount, and spending their "salary" on the necessary and luxury items that reflect the career and lifestyle they have chosen.

How does it benefit young people?

Aspects of language arts, mathematics, and social sciences are incorporated in the program which can be used to help young people:

- Explore careers available to them.
- Investigate how career choices can be influenced by education and other factors.
- Make consumer choices related to future independent living.
- Learn skills needed to manage their finances.
- Evaluate their success in managing their monthly income and expenses.
- Explore alternatives to balance a budget.

How does the simulation work?

After choosing an occupation, participants receive a monthly gross salary that corresponds to their occupation. They then deduct income-related taxes and determine how much of their net salary they wish to save. Using a sample savings account register, participants enter the amount of their savings.



Each participant receives a sample packet of checks, a deposit slip, and a checking account register. After subtracting the savings amount, the "net" salary figure is deposited into the checking account and recorded in the checkbook register. Throughout the activity, the participants keep track of their finances with their checkbook register. Whether they have adequate funds or run out of money, they continue through the activity and finish with either a positive or negative balance.

After making their deposits, participants go on to make spending choices from the categories below. Following each choice, they write a check for the total amount, record the information in the checkbook register, and balance their checkbook.

HOUSING— Participants decide on a location and rent an efficiency or one bedroom apartment.

TRANSPORTATION— Here, new and used cars as well as public transportation are the options.

INSURANCE— If a car was chosen, automobile insurance is required. Health, renters' and life insurance are options.

UTILITIES— The total monthly bill corresponds to the type of housing selected. Options include premium cable, cell phones and internet access.

GROCERIES— Participants select the level of food purchases to fit their preferences. The grocery cost is only for food purchased at the grocery store and prepared at home.

CLOTHING— Participants learn the amount corresponding to their gross income level. That amount, plus a set cost for laundry and dry cleaning, will be the total clothing cost.

ENTERTAINMENT— Participants are offered many choices: concerts, eating out, professional sports events, etc. One check is written is the total amount chosen.

DECK OF CHANCE— They choose a card from the deck that represents some of the unexpected expenses and income often encountered in adult daily life: "You received a spending ticket, pay \$150"; "You had an accident and have to pay the \$500 deductible." After drawing a card, the participants either write a check for the stated amount or add the amount to their checking account.