



**Time  
Required:**  
30 minutes

**Grade Level:**  
9-12th grades

Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Marketplace Activity

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## “Getting the Priorities” Activity

Infusionomics Themes, Keystone Economic Principles, and Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace:

• **THEME: CHOICES**

- **Skills:** 1. Personal Management; a. Time Management and Organization; ii. Utilize time and manage workload efficiently
- **Keystone Economic Principle™ #1:** We all make choices
- **Keystone Economic Principle™ #3:** All choices have consequences.

• **THEME: COSTS**

- **Keystone Economic Principle™ #2:** TANSTAAFL™ (There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch)
- **Keystone Economic Principle™ #7:** Economic thinking is marginal thinking

\*\* For additional standards and content references, please see the [end of document](#).

### Overview:

In the Getting the Priorities activity, the teacher uses the analogy of a vase filled with rocks, sand, and water to show how full our lives can get. This analogy will help students see that we must prioritize our activities in order to make room for what is most important. Following the demonstration, the students will get the chance to identify the “rocks, pebbles and sand” in the life of a “healthy high school student.” Then do a writing exercise on how well they are managing their time.

### Objectives:

This activity will help students begin to think about priorities and making time for the things that are most important to them.

### Materials and Handouts:

Copies of [Handout #1](#)

If you would like to act out the “Background Story” in your own class:

- A clear vase or container, rocks to fill the vase, pebbles to pour into the vase, sand to pour into the vase, and water to pour into the vase

## **Background Story:**

*I heard this story about a professor who was trying to teach his students a life lesson. He took a clear, narrow-necked vase and filled it with as many large stones as could fit through the neck. Then he asked his students if the vase was full. They said it was. "Wrong," he said, and then filled it with small pebbles that he shook down until he got in all he could. "Full now?" he asked. "Yes," they said. "Wrong," he countered and proceeded to fill up every nook and cranny with fine sand. "Now?" he asked. "Absolutely!" they replied. Then he poured in some water.*

*"What's the life lesson?" he queried.*

*"That no matter how full your life seems, there is always room for more," a student ventured.*

*"Completely the opposite," The professor explained. "The rocks are the important things in life, such as your health, family, friends, work, spirituality, and community. If I had filled the vase with other things – the water, the pebbles, and the sand – then the vase would have been full and there would be no room for the rocks."*

*The lesson: don't fill up your life with other things until you have made a space for what matters most.*

Barbara Sher, Attention Games: 101 Fun, Easy Games That Help Kids Learn to Focus. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), pp. 150-151.

## **Demonstration:**

If time and resources allow, do the demonstration described in the "Background Story" for the class.

- If this is not possible, simply read the story to the class.

## **Pre-Exercise Class Discussion:**

*Here are some optional questions for class discussion. Do not feel as though you must use all or any of these questions.*

- What does it mean to prioritize one thing over another?
- What factors determine what we value most?

## **Activity:**

- Write three category headings on the board: Rocks, Pebbles, and Sand
- Tell the students that you are going to have them help you determine what a "healthy high school student" would determine is a Rock, Pebble, and Sand.
- Present each of these words individually to the class. Have them classify it as a Rock, Pebble, or Sand, and write the word under the appropriate heading on the board.
  - Family, sports and clubs, time on the internet, friends and other relationships, household chores, school or other educational activities, time with God, movies/TV, talking on the phone/texting, honing personal skills (e.g., music), physical exercise
    - Add or remove categories depending on the classroom situation.
  - Allow for class discussion on each of these. Students may have differing opinions, but allow them to talk about them. If the class cannot decide on where to put the word, have the class vote.
- Then have the students write down what they have done over the last 3 days on a sheet of paper. Have them decide which of these activities are Rocks, which are Pebbles, and which are Sand.
  - Ask the students the following questions:
    - Why do some people probably have the same activity under a different level of priority (rock, pebble, sand)?
    - Is it all right that people prioritize things differently?

- Are there some activities that all people should categorize as Rocks? Which ones?
- Are there some activities that all people should categorize as Sand? Which ones?

**Writing Exercise:**

- Give the students each a copy of [Handout #1](#), and allow them 10 minutes to write.

## Additional Standards and Content References

### Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics:

- Standard #1 : Scarcity; Opportunity cost, Scarcity, Wants/needs
- Standard #2 : Decision Making; Marginal Analysis, Cost/Benefit analysis
- Standard #15 : Economic Growth; Trade-offs among goals, Human Capital, Investment

### Partnership for 21st Century Life Skills Concept:

- Life and Career Skills > Initiative and Self-Direction > Manage Goals and Time

### National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education:

- Entrepreneurial Skills B. Entrepreneurial Traits/Behaviors; Personal Management; B.24 Use Time-Management Principles

### Economics Vocabulary:

- **Accountability** – assuming responsibility for one’s actions
- **Discipline** – control of one’s emotions or actions
- **Efficiency** – achieving a goal most effectively
- **Enlightened self-interest** – considering the needs of others as a means of enhancing one’s own well-being
- **Law of diminishing marginal utility** – A widely observed relationship in which the additional satisfaction (marginal utility) associated with consuming additional units of the same product in a given amount of time eventually declines.
- **Marginal benefit/utility** – the additional gain from consuming or producing one more unit of a good or service
- Source: *EconEdLink.org* by the Council for Economic Education

### Keystone Economic Principles™:

- For more information: [http://infusionomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Keystone\\_Cheat.pdf](http://infusionomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Keystone_Cheat.pdf)

## Writing Exercise



**Look back at your list of activities from the last three days and the consider way you spent your time. Look at the categories on the board and how we determined a “healthy high school student” would spend his/her time. In what ways are you spending your time well (i.e., on thing that are a high priority)? In what ways are you wasting time on unimportant things? Give specific examples of each from the last three days. How can you be better about making sure you have time in your life for the things you prioritize most? Note: Each person’s situation is different, so take into account your personal life circumstances.**

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