



Needs vs. Wants

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Social Studies
Grades K-2



Introduction

What is the difference between wanting something and needing something? In this lesson students will examine the difference between wants vs needs as well as examine why people need things like water, shelter, and food.

Learning Objectives

([5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions](#)) Students will be able to define and distinguish needs vs wants as well as examine why people need things (water, food, shelter).

Materials Needed

- [Pictures of wants and needs](#)
- [Needs and Wants video](#)

Procedure

Ask students to draw a picture of themselves and all the things that they need to survive surrounding that picture. Then, ask students to share their pictures with the class. Write on the front board “Wants” and “Needs.” Then as students share their pictures write down the things they share under the correct category. For example, students may say they “need” a videogame to survive and may not quite yet understand that that is a “want.” Next, tell students that needs are things that we must have to survive, while wants are things that make life more fun, but we can survive without them. Tell students that today, we will be discussing the difference between the two.

Activity 1: ‘Needs and Wants’ video

1. Show students the ‘Needs and Wants’ video.
2. Next, explain that people need certain things to survive. For example, food provides us with vitamins and minerals we need to live, and water helps our bodies work properly. We need shelter to protect us from the weather and for a place to rest our bodies. We need clothes to cover our bodies and keep us warm in the winter and so on. Talk about what would happen if we didn’t have these things.
3. Discuss that a want is something that makes your life more fun, enjoyable, or easier, but you don’t need it to survive. For example, you may want a swimming pool to cool off in the summer or want a cat to play with. These are things that you do not need to survive but that you enjoy having.

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Activity 2: Small group sort

1. Divide students into small groups and give them pictures of things they need and things they may want. Then challenge students to work together to sort these pictures into the correct category.
2. Once students have separated the pictures, have them check with you to determine if they are correct. If they are correct, students must glue them onto a piece of paper under the correct category.

Activity 3: "If I was on an island"

1. For this activity students must be separated into pairs. Explain to students that they are to imagine they are stranded on an island and must survive until someone comes to rescue them. The goal is to write or draw ten things they want or need.
2. Once students have completed their task, come together as a class to determine which partners will survive by looking at their list.

Activity 4: Independent practice

Remind students that a need is something that you can't survive without and a want is something that you wish for but do not need. Then, challenge students to think of one thing that they want and one thing they need and draw a picture of each and write a sentence about why they want or need each thing.

Evaluation

Examine students' knowledge on the topic by looking at their small group sort and independent practice worksheet.