



JA FINANCIAL LITERACY®

CASE CHALLENGE



Your Future Self Financial Plan

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

CASE CHALLENGE

More Than Numbers

What + Why: Financial outcomes are not random; they are built from consistent choices.

Supporting Materials:

Your Future Self Financial Plan (Case Brief)

Engage: Introduction (Case Challenge)

Character Traits (Case Challenge)

Instructions:

1. Read the **Case Brief**, the **Engage: Introduction**, and the **Character Traits** information in your case challenge materials and consider:
 - How have your character traits already shaped the way you handle money?



- Why does knowing your character traits matter before building a financial plan?
- Which of the three character domains (self, others, community) do you think will create the most tension with your financial goals over the next 10 years, and why?

NAME: _____

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ACTIVITY

Character in Action

What + Why: Character shows up in patterns—and patterns reveal who you are.

Supporting Materials:

Character Traits (Case Challenge)

Instructions:

1. Read the four profiles.
2. Answer the following questions and reference the **Character Traits** information from the case challenge materials as needed.

Most Like You

- Which character feels most like you financially?
- What specific financial behavior made you say that?
- What is one financial strength and one potential challenge of that approach?

Least Like You

- Which character feels least like you financially?
- What's the biggest financial difference in how you and the character operate?

Profiles

Hannah

When Hannah gets money, she decides what it's for before she spends it. If she plans to save, she saves. If she commits her money to something, she follows through. She thinks carefully about costs before saying yes and prefers to move forward once she understands what she's getting into, especially when a decision feels uncertain.

Paulo

If Paulo wants something that costs money, he looks for a way to make it happen. He'll pick up an extra shift, sell something, or take on a side hustle without overthinking it. Uncertainty does not stop him. He assumes he will figure it out as he goes. That energy helps him move quickly, but sometimes he commits money before fully thinking through what it will mean later.

Kimi

When something unexpected affects her money, like an expense she did not plan for, a change in income, or a canceled plan, Kimi adjusts. She reworks what she can and keeps moving. She does not stay stuck on what went wrong. She may not always be the one pushing for a big financial move, but when things change, she responds steadily and keeps herself on track.

Anton

Anton trusts his ability to handle what comes next. If something costs money or requires effort, he assumes he can rise to it. He focuses on what is possible rather than what could go wrong and is quick to pursue opportunities. Because he expects things to work out, he does not always feel the need to build a detailed plan ahead of time.

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ACTIVITY

Instinct Check: The Others Domain

What + Why: Your everyday decisions quietly reveal the character traits that drive you.

Supporting Materials:

Character Traits (Case Challenge)

**Instructions:**

1. Read each situation carefully.
2. Choose the response that most closely reflects what you would actually do, not what sounds best.
3. You may relate to more than one option, but select the one that feels most natural to you.
4. If none of the options truly fit, select "none of these."
5. Do not overthink your choice. Go with your first instinct.
6. Be honest. The goal is to notice patterns in how you naturally respond in financial and group situations.
7. Review your responses and answer the reflection questions.

	Situation	 Response
1	You and a few friends plan to grab lunch. A friend pulls you aside and says money is tight and asks whether you can pay for lunch. This has happened before. What do you do?	☐ Ask what's going on before deciding whether to help. (Empathy) ☐ Explain it doesn't feel fair to keep paying and suggest a better solution. (Fairness) ☐ Pay for lunch because keeping everyone together matters most. (Connectedness) ☐ None of these.
2	You've been saving for a car. A close friend is moving far away and asks you to come to their farewell weekend because it means a lot to them. The trip would use half your savings and likely delay your car goal. What do you do?	☐ Honestly explain that you can't spend the money. (Honesty) ☐ Go because being there for your friend matters more right now. (Kindness) ☐ Think about everything they've done for you before deciding. (Gratitude) ☐ None of these.
3	You are helping run a fundraiser, and the group is falling short of its money goal. One member has not been contributing much effort, and it is affecting how much the group earns. What do you do?	☐ Point out that everyone agreed to do their part. (Fairness) ☐ Help reorganize the work so the group can still succeed. (Teamwork) ☐ Check in privately before assuming the worst. (Empathy) ☐ None of these.
4	You and a group of friends have been planning a weekend activity that requires everyone to contribute money. One friend tells the group they cannot afford to go and will sit this one out. What do you do?	☐ Suggest everyone chips in so they can come. (Teamwork) ☐ Talk with them privately and offer help. (Empathy) ☐ Change the plan so no one is left out. (Connectedness) ☐ None of these.

(continued)

	Situation	✓ Response
5	Your school is forming a committee to decide how a limited budget will be spent on student activities. Not every idea can be funded. You are invited to join. What drives how you participate? As you consider your response, remember that supporting one proposal may mean another proposal receives less funding.	☐ Support the option that benefits the whole school community. (Connectedness) ☐ Work with others to build a plan everyone can support. (Teamwork) ☐ Support the option the majority agrees on. (Fairness) ☐ None of these.
6	A close friend asks to borrow \$200 until their next paycheck. You have the money, but you have been burned before. What do you do?	☐ Lend the money because you like helping people you care about. (Generosity) ☐ Be honest about your concerns before deciding. (Honesty) ☐ Say yes because helping them matters more than protecting yourself. (Kindness) ☐ None of these.
7	You enter a competition and work closely with a few friends to prepare your entry. Their input plays an important role in your win. You receive \$400. The money is given to you. What do you do?	☐ Thank your friends with a small gift and keep the rest. (Gratitude) ☐ Make sure the organizers know your friends helped. (Honesty) ☐ Split the prize evenly with everyone who helped. (Generosity) ☐ None of these.

Review your responses to the scenarios and answer the reflection questions.

1. Which situation was hardest to answer and why?
2. Based on your responses, which two traits from the Others domain seem most likely to influence your financial decisions? Explain why.

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DATE: _____

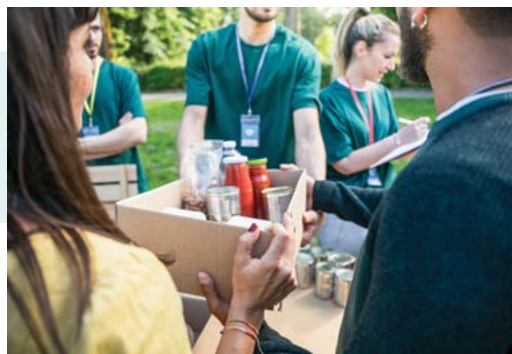
ACTIVITY

Community Challenge: The Community Domain

What + Why: Reveal which community responsibility motivates you most and use that insight to identify the Community domain character trait that will shape your financial decisions.

Supporting Materials:

Character Traits (Case Challenge)

**Instructions:**

1. Read the three community challenge options.
2. Choose the one that feels most important or meaningful to you.
3. Write 3–4 sentences explaining why this issue stands out to you.
4. Share your reasoning with two peers: one who chose the same challenge and one who chose a different challenge.

Option 1: Community Care Campaign

Public spaces in your community are increasingly neglected. The town has limited funds for maintenance, and shared spaces are deteriorating. You care about this issue and want to help, but getting involved will require a commitment of your time, effort, or money.

Option 2: Belonging & Voice Initiative

Your school has a limited budget for student activities. Some students feel that funding decisions do not reflect the needs or perspectives of all groups. You believe every voice deserves to be heard, but advocating for change will take personal effort and may require you to put your own resources behind what you believe in.

(continued)

Option 3: Youth Opportunity Expansion

Your community lacks affordable access to programs that help young people build skills, explore careers, and prepare for financial independence, and you have noticed it firsthand. You have the opportunity to get involved in expanding that access, but it will require a personal commitment of time, energy, and, in some cases, your own money.

Choose a Community Challenge

Select the one that feels most important to you:

- ☐ Community Care Campaign
- ☐ Belonging & Voice Initiative
- ☐ Youth Opportunity Expansion

In 3–4 sentences, explain:

- What specifically about this issue stands out to you.
- What responsibility you feel in response to it.
- Why this issue feels more important to you than the others.

NAME: _____

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CASE CHALLENGE

My 10-Year Financial Plan

What + Why: Build a financial plan that reflects who you are, where you're starting, and the choices you want to make over the next 10 years.

A strong financial plan is about more than numbers. Across this activity, you will examine your values, career pathway, income, saving habits, behaviors, borrowing decisions, investing strategy, and risk management choices. Each checkpoint adds a new piece to your plan and helps you connect financial decisions to the life you want to build.

Instructions:

NOTE: This activity is completed in checkpoints across multiple sessions. Only complete the checkpoint your teacher assigns. Each checkpoint builds on the last and connects to what you're learning. Each checkpoint will have a checklist to help keep you on track.

1. Refer to the appropriate **Financially Me** activities from your **FinanceFolio** as you complete each checkpoint.
2. Be realistic. This activity is designed to help you make thoughtful decisions based on your goals, priorities, and likely future circumstances. There are no perfect answers.
3. Revisit and revise earlier responses as needed. Financial plans evolve as new information becomes available.
4. By the end, you will have created a personalized **My 10-Year Financial Plan** that connects your values, financial decisions, and future goals.

Submission:

Turn in your completed work to your teacher.

CHECKPOINT 1: Character Compass

Financial decisions are influenced by more than income and expenses. The beliefs, priorities, and personal traits that guide your choices often shape how you respond to opportunities, challenges, and trade-offs. This checkpoint helps you identify the character traits that will serve as the foundation for your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**.

Supporting Materials:

Refer to these **Financially Me FinanceFolio** artifacts for evidence of the priorities, trade-offs, and decisions that consistently appeared in your work:

- **Unit 1:** Values-Based Spending Plan, Career-Education Decision Tree
- **Unit 2:** 5-Year Budget, My Savings Habits & Strategies

Character Traits (Case Challenge)

Instructions:

1. Review the character traits that surfaced for you in the Self, Others, and Community domains over the last few activities.
2. Select at least one trait from each domain that genuinely reflects how you operate financially and add them to your Character Compass.
3. Choose one trait that you believe will guide you most strongly during financial decisions over the next 10 years. Identify the core personal value that you think will mainly guide your decision making and behavior, especially during difficult choices or external pressure. This will become your True North trait.
4. For each domain, explain how the trait could influence a financial decision you may face in your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**.
5. Complete the Stress-Test Your True North reflection.

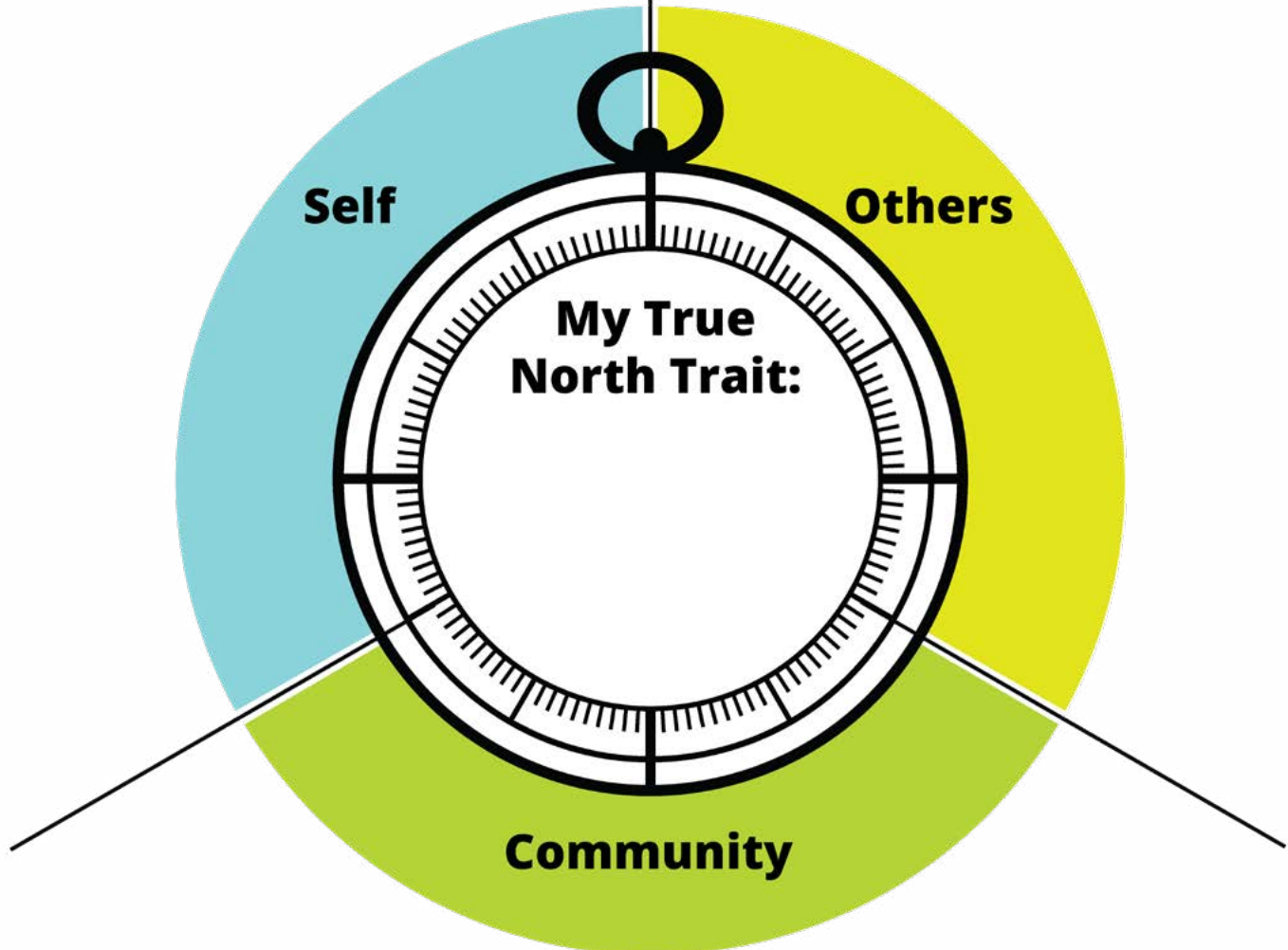
Character Compass

Trait Name:

This trait will influence how I:

Trait Name:

This trait will influence how I:



Trait Name:

This trait will influence how I:

Stress-Test Your True North Reflection

Financial pressure is inevitable. Consider the first 5 years of adulthood.

- Describe a realistic financial pressure you may face.
- How would your True North trait guide your response to the financial pressure you described?
- What trade-off might you accept because of your response?



This is the end of Checkpoint 1. Wait to begin Checkpoint 2 until directed by your teacher.

CHECKPOINT 2: Starting Line Snapshot

Your financial starting point shapes the opportunities, responsibilities, and trade-offs you may face after high school. Understanding where you begin helps you make more realistic plans for the future.

The goal of this checkpoint is to document your career pathway, income, costs, goals, and Character Compass connection so you can establish a realistic foundation for your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**.

Supporting Materials:

Refer to these completed **Financially Me FinanceFolio** activities to assist in your planning:

- **Unit 1:** Values-Based Spending Plan (Examine how a chosen career and potential salary impacts your values, goals, and priorities.); Career-Education Decision Tree (Review possible pathways within a chosen career.); Taxation Documentation (Revisit how taxes, withholding, and worker responsibilities affect the income available to support your financial goals.); The Benefits of Benefits (Revisit the role benefits play in overall compensation.)
- **Unit 2:** My Purchase Plan, 5-Year Budget, My Savings Habits & Strategies (Revisit the financial goals, priorities, and obligations you identified earlier.)

Character Traits (Case Challenge)

Online Resources or provided PDFs

- O*NET Online (<https://www.onetonline.org/>)
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>)
- Credential Value Index Navigator (<https://www.credentialvalueindex.org/#cvi>)
- College Navigator (<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>)
- Salary Reference Guide PDF
- Education Costs PDF

Instructions:

1. Use your completed **What Your Path Costs, Benefits Enrollment Decision**, and **Paycheck Shift** activities to gather the information needed to create a realistic starting point for your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**, including your career pathway, income, taxes, benefits, education or training costs, financial obligations, and early financial goals.
2. For the numbered fields given, refer to the corresponding callout boxes in your completed **Paycheck Shift** activity.

- 1 Career Selected: _____
- 2 Required Education Level: _____
- 3 Gross Annual Income: _____
- 4 Taxable Income (Gross Annual Income – Annual Cost of Benefits):
\$ _____
- 5 Net Annual Income (after benefits & taxes): _____
- 6 Total Education Cost (Use the full tuition amount OR the total repaid over 10 years at 6% interest if loans were used.): _____

One financially grounded reason this pathway fits my starting line:

List 2–3 required financial obligations you expect in your first year after entering this career:

1.

2.

3.

List 1–2 financial goals you intend to work toward in your first 3 years.

1.

2.

Character Compass Connection

- Choose one of your Character Compass traits. (Consider whether this is your True North trait.) Explain how it influenced your career pathway, starting point, or early financial goals.
- What career pathway, financial goal, or opportunity are you choosing not to pursue right now, and why?



This is the end of Checkpoint 2. Wait to begin Checkpoint 3 until directed by your teacher.

CHECKPOINT 3: Income Plan

Income rarely stays the same. The career pathway you chose comes with a starting salary; but over the next 10 years, how that income increases will depend on the decisions you make, the opportunities you pursue, and the trade-offs you are willing to accept.

This checkpoint helps you project realistic income growth over time and connect those decisions to the character traits and priorities that will guide the decisions.

Supporting Materials:

Refer to these completed **Financially Me FinanceFolio** activities to assist in your planning:

- **Unit 2:** My Purchase Plan, 5-Year Budget, Smart Spending Strategies (Revisit the purchases, priorities, trade-offs, and spending strategies that matter most to you.)

Character Traits (Case Challenge)

Instructions:

1. Create a realistic 10-year income growth plan by projecting how your earnings may change over time. Consider how your future income could support the goals, purchases, and financial priorities you identified earlier.
2. Use the net annual income from Checkpoint 2 as a starting point.
3. Use the Character Compass from Checkpoint 1 to guide your decisions about income growth, career opportunities, and other choices you might face.

5 Year 1 starting net annual income: _____

Time Frame	Type of Increase (Choose one.)	Percentage Applied	New Annual Pay After Increase	What might happen during this period to lead to an increase? (Explain your choice.)
Years 2-3	☐ Merit increase ☐ COLA ☐ Promotion ☐ Job change	_____ %	\$ _____	
Years 4-5	☐ Merit increase ☐ COLA ☐ Promotion ☐ Job change	_____ %	\$ _____	
Years 6-8	☐ Merit increase ☐ COLA ☐ Promotion ☐ Job change	_____ %	\$ _____	
Years 9-10	☐ Merit increase ☐ COLA ☐ Promotion ☐ Job change	_____ %	\$ _____	

Income Stability

- Is your income steady, seasonal, commission-based, or variable?
- How does that affect your financial strategy?

Character Compass Connection

- Choose one of your character traits that guided your income decisions in this projection. (Consider whether this is your True North trait.) Explain how this trait influenced the increases you selected.
- What earning option, opportunity, or lifestyle are you choosing not to pursue, and why?



This is the end of Checkpoint 3. Wait to begin Checkpoint 4 until directed by your teacher.

CHECKPOINT 4: Saving & Spending Plan

Saving becomes more powerful when it is connected to specific goals and priorities. The way you divide your money reflects the opportunities, responsibilities, and future plans that matter most to you.

The goal of this checkpoint is to create a saving plan that connects your future income to investing, goal setting, and long-term financial priorities.

Supporting Materials:

Refer to these completed **Financially Me FinanceFolio** activities to assist in your planning:

- **Unit 1:** Values-Based Spending Plan (Examine how a chosen career and potential salary impacts your values, goals, and priorities.)
- **Unit 2:** My Savings Habits & Strategies (Revisit the saving habits, barriers, saving systems, and financial goals you identified earlier.)

Instructions:

1. Create a saving and spending plan that reflects your projected income, priorities, and long-term goals. Adjust earlier goals as needed to fit your future plans and financial responsibilities.
2. Use the Net Annual Income from Checkpoint 2 as a starting point.
3. Use your Character Compass to guide decisions about saving, spending, investing, and goal prioritization.

Choose your saving strategy.

☐ 50/30/20 Rule <i>50% needs, 30% wants, 20% savings</i>	☐ Fixed Dollar Amount <i>Set a specific \$ to save each month.</i>	☐ Other Percentage <i>Choose your own savings %.</i>
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Apply your saving strategy to each income milestone. Use your net annual income from the income plan completed earlier. If you do not plan to invest yet, you may allocate \$0 to investments.

Time Frame	Net Annual Income	Monthly Take-Home Pay ($\div 12$)	Total Monthly Savings Amount	Monthly Savings Allocation
Year 1	5			\$_____ savings goals \$_____ investments
Years 2-3	(Use amount from Checkpoint 3.)			\$_____ savings goals \$_____ investments
Years 4-5	(Use amount from Checkpoint 3.)			\$_____ savings goals \$_____ investments
Years 6-8	(Use amount from Checkpoint 3.)			\$_____ savings goals \$_____ investments
Years 9-10	(Use amount from Checkpoint 3.)			\$_____ savings goals \$_____ investments

Savings Goals

How will you divide your savings among your financial goals? List at least three goals and adjust them as needed to fit your future plans. (Examples: emergency fund, vehicle purchase, home down payment, education or training, electronic device, vacation, etc.)

Priority Rank	Goal	Time Horizon	Monthly Amount Allocated	Why it Matters
1		☐ Immediate ☐ Short-Term (1–2 Years) ☐ Medium-Term (3–5 Years) ☐ Long-Term (6–10 Years)		
2		☐ Immediate ☐ Short-Term (1–2 Years) ☐ Medium-Term (3–5 Years) ☐ Long-Term (6–10 Years)		
3		☐ Immediate ☐ Short-Term (1–2 Years) ☐ Medium-Term (3–5 Years) ☐ Long-Term (6–10 Years)		
4		☐ Immediate ☐ Short-Term (1–2 Years) ☐ Medium-Term (3–5 Years) ☐ Long-Term (6–10 Years)		

(continued)

Priority Rank	Goal	Time Horizon	Monthly Amount Allocated	Why it Matters
5		☐ Immediate ☐ Short-Term (1–2 Years) ☐ Medium-Term (3–5 Years) ☐ Long-Term (6–10 Years)		
6		☐ Immediate ☐ Short-Term (1–2 Years) ☐ Medium-Term (3–5 Years) ☐ Long-Term (6–10 Years)		
7		☐ Immediate ☐ Short-Term (1–2 Years) ☐ Medium-Term (3–5 Years) ☐ Long-Term (6–10 Years)		
8		☐ Immediate ☐ Short-Term (1–2 Years) ☐ Medium-Term (3–5 Years) ☐ Long-Term (6–10 Years)		

- How does your savings amount change as your income increases, and what does your plan reveal about your priorities over the next 10 years? (Consider: Which goals receive the largest share of your savings? What trade-offs did you make when deciding where to allocate your money?)
- What goal, purchase, or lifestyle choice are you choosing to prioritize less, and why?

Character Compass Connection

- Choose one of your Character Compass traits. (Consider whether this is your True North trait.) Explain how it influenced your saving priorities, spending decisions, or financial goals.



This is the end of Checkpoint 4. Wait to begin Checkpoint 5 until directed by your teacher.

CHECKPOINT 5: Debt & Borrowing Plan

Borrowing is not inherently good or bad—it is a tool, and how you use it determines whether it works for you or against you. The decisions you make about when to borrow, how much to take on, and how to repay it will shape your credit, your financial flexibility, and your options for years to come.

This checkpoint helps you build a realistic borrowing and credit plan grounded in your priorities, your starting point, and the character traits that will guide you when the pressure to borrow is real.

Supporting Materials:

Refer to these completed **Financially Me FinanceFolio** activities to assist in your planning:

- **Unit 2:** 5-Year Budget (Revisit the purchases, priorities, trade-offs, and spending strategies that matter most to you.)
- **Unit 3:** Credit Do's and Don'ts, Credit Score Impact & Protection Plan, Debt Solutions Flowchart, and Consumer Protection Playbook (Revisit responsible borrowing practices, credit-building strategies, debt management approaches, and consumer protection habits.)

Instructions:

1. Create a realistic borrowing and credit plan that reflects your anticipated financial needs, repayment strategy, and approach to managing financial risk over the next 10 years.
2. Use the Total Education Cost amount from Checkpoint 2 in the first row, as needed.
3. Use your Character Compass to guide decisions about borrowing, repayment, credit use, and financial commitments.

Anticipated Borrowing

Type of Debt	Estimated Amount Borrowed	Why Borrow?	Timeline	Repayment Approach
Total Education Cost	6			
Total Anticipated Borrowing: \$_____				

- If no borrowing is anticipated, explain why:

Borrowing Reflection

- What am I choosing NOT to borrow for—and why?

Credit Plan

- How I will build and protect my credit:

Character Compass Connection

- Choose one of your Character Compass traits. (Consider whether this is your True North trait.) Explain how it influenced your borrowing, repayment, or credit-building decisions.
- What type of debt, purchase, or financial commitment are you choosing to avoid, and how does one of your Character Compass traits influence that decision?



This is the end of Checkpoint 5. Wait to begin Checkpoint 6 until directed by your teacher.

CHECKPOINT 6: Investing & Risk Plan

Building wealth is not just about earning more. It is about putting what you earn to work and protecting what you have built. The investing and risk management decisions you make in the next 10 years will determine how much financial security and flexibility you have in the decade that follows.

This checkpoint helps you develop a realistic investing strategy, identify the risks most likely to affect your plan, and put protection measures in place before life demands them.

Supporting Materials:

Refer to these completed **Financially Me FinanceFolio** activities to assist in your planning:

- **Unit 4:** Personal Investment Pyramid, Personal Investment Pathway, Risk Assessment Chart, and Financial Independence Checklist (Revisit your investing preferences, risk tolerance, financial risks, insurance needs, and long-term goals.)

Instructions:

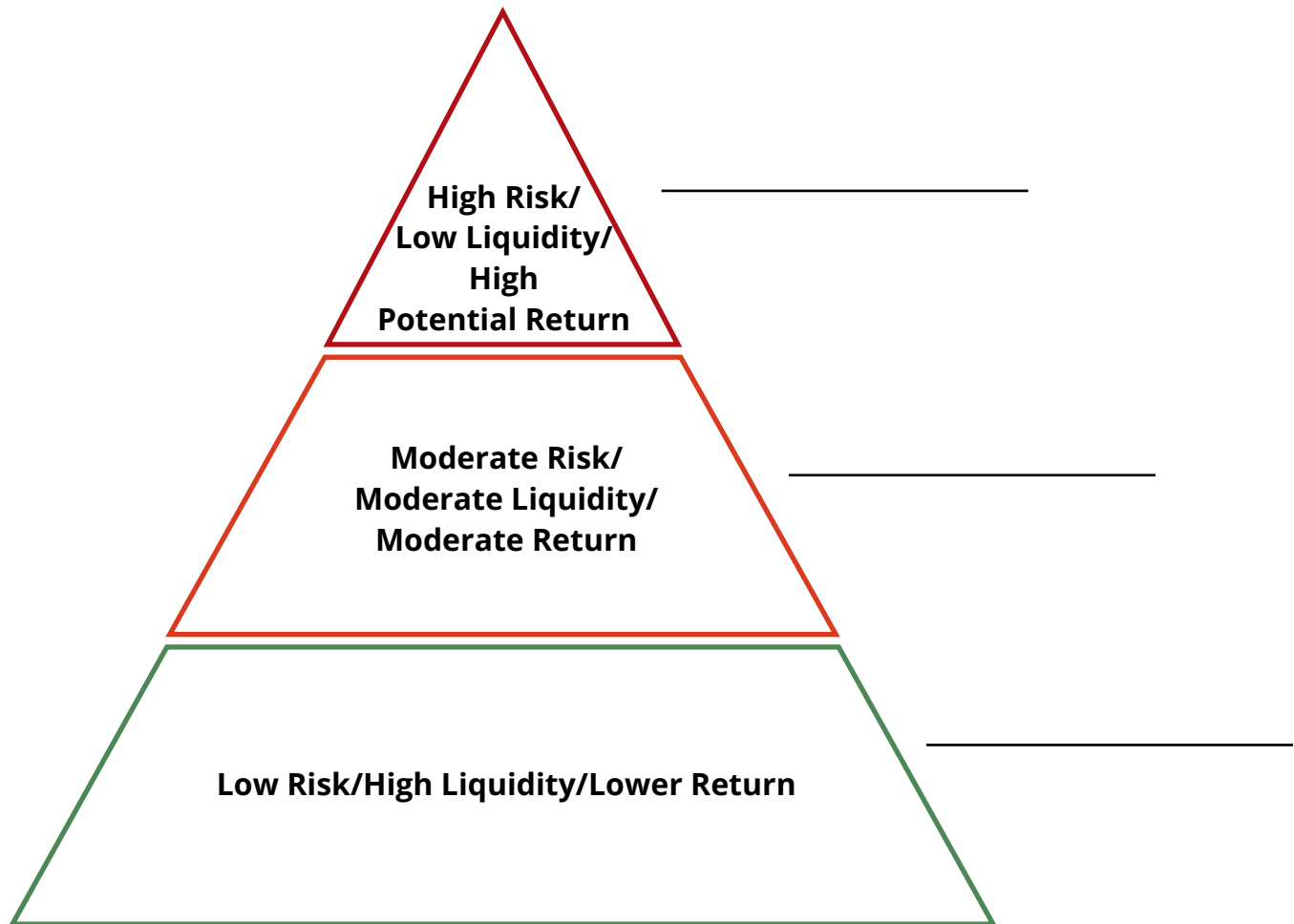
1. Apply the monthly investment amounts you identified in Checkpoint 4 to create an investing and risk-management plan that reflects your goals, timeline, and comfort with risk over the next 10 years. If you chose not to invest in Checkpoint 4, enter \$0 and focus on your financial protection strategies.
2. Consider the financial risks you identified in your **Risk Assessment Chart** as you determine your emergency fund goal, insurance coverage, and other protection strategies.
3. Use your Character Compass to guide decisions about investing, risk management, financial protection, and long-term planning.

Investment Strategy

Question	Response
When will you begin investing?	
Refer back to Checkpoint 4. Compare your Year 1 investment amount to your Years 9–10 investment amount. How does your investment plan adjust as you age?	
What type(s) of accounts will you use? (e.g., 401(k), Roth IRA, brokerage account)	
General Risk Tolerance: ☐ Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High Why is this approach a better fit for your goals and timeline over the next 10 years than a more aggressive or more conservative option?	
10-Year Investing Goal	

Investment Pyramid Allocation

Use your 10-Year Investing Goal total from the Investment Strategy table and allocate it across the given investment pyramid based on your risk tolerance level and your diversification strategies.



Insurance & Risk Protection

Insurance Type	Risk It Protects Against	When / How You'll Get It
Health Insurance		
Auto Insurance		
Renters or Homeowners Insurance		
Other (if applicable)		

Financial Protection

Question	Response
What is the biggest financial risk you may face during the next 10 years?	
How will you prepare for or protect yourself against this risk?	

Reflection Questions

- Why is your chosen level of risk a better fit for your goals and timeline than a more aggressive or more conservative approach? (Consider: How does your risk tolerance influence your investing decisions? Which protection strategy will be most important during the next 10 years? How do your investing and protection plans work together to support your future goals?)
- What investing approach, risk level, or financial opportunity are you choosing not to pursue, and why?

Character Compass Connection

- Choose one of your Character Compass traits. (Consider whether this is your True North trait.) Explain how it influenced your investing, risk-management, or financial protection decisions.

My 10-Year Financial Plan Rubric

Criteria	4 – Strong	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Beginning
Completeness & Instruction Follow-Through	All six checkpoints are fully completed with every required field addressed. Instructions are followed accurately throughout the plan.	All six checkpoints are completed with minor gaps. Most instructions are followed accurately.	One or more checkpoints are incomplete or missing required components. Instructions are followed inconsistently.	Multiple checkpoints are incomplete or missing. Instructions are largely not followed.
Quantitative Accuracy & Consistency	Salary, tax, education cost, and projection figures are realistic and accurate, and carry forward logically across checkpoints: Income aligns with savings, savings aligns with investing, and borrowing fits within stated income.	Figures are mostly realistic and accurate, with only minor inconsistencies between checkpoints that do not affect the plan's overall validity.	Figures contain noticeable errors, unrealistic assumptions, or misalignment between checkpoints that affects the plan's logic.	Figures are inaccurate, unrealistic, or missing, and numbers conflict across checkpoints.
Character Compass Integration	The True North trait and Character Compass connections are clearly identified and consistently applied to decisions across all six checkpoints.	Character Compass connections are present in each checkpoint with reasonable consistency.	Character Compass connections are present but vague, inconsistent, or disconnected from the decisions described.	Character Compass connections are missing or unrelated to the financial decisions in the plan.
Trade-Off & Opportunity Cost Reasoning	Each checkpoint identifies a specific opportunity, goal, or option not pursued, with a clear, logical explanation grounded in the student's stated priorities.	Most checkpoints identify a trade-off with a reasonable explanation.	Trade-offs are identified, but explanations are generic or only loosely connected to the student's plan.	Trade-offs are missing, or explanations do not reflect genuine reasoning.

(continued)

Criteria	4 – Strong	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Beginning
Depth & Authenticity of Reflection	Reflections are specific and personal, draw accurate detail from prior FinanceFolio activities, and demonstrate genuine financial reasoning rather than generic statements.	Reflections are clear and relevant, drawing general detail from prior FinanceFolio activities with reasonable accuracy.	Reflections are surface-level, with minimal connection to prior FinanceFolio work or repeated ideas across checkpoints.	Reflections are minimal, vague, or absent, with little or no evidence of prior FinanceFolio work.
Organization & Communication	The response is clearly organized and professionally presented, and is easy to follow from checkpoint to checkpoint.	The response is organized and generally easy to follow, with minor clarity issues.	Organization is inconsistent, making parts of the plan difficult to follow.	The response lacks organization, making the plan difficult to evaluate.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

What Your Path Costs

What + Why: A salary becomes real only when you understand what it takes to earn it.

Education and training pathways are not structured the same way. Some careers require years of education before you can begin earning full income. Others allow you to enter the workforce, military, or an apprenticeship immediately while gaining experience and training.

Costs differ because pathways differ. Some pathways require tuition, certifications, licensing, or specialized training. Others require a commitment of time, service, or experience. Each pathway involves trade-offs that can affect income, expenses, opportunities, and future goals.

Supporting Materials:

Values-Based Spending Plan (FinanceFolio, Unit 1)

Career-Education Decision Tree (FinanceFolio, Unit 1)

The Benefits of Benefits (FinanceFolio, Unit 1)

Salary Resource Guide (optional)

Education Cost Information (optional)

Instructions:

1. Refer to the career you selected in the **Values-Based Spending Plan** located in your **FinanceFolio** and the **Career-Education Decision Tree** for the various routes you can take to qualify for a career in that field. It may also be helpful to revisit **The Benefits of Benefits** reflection to determine the importance of other non-salary considerations.

2. Use either the online resources provided by your teacher or the **Salary Resource Guide** and the **Education Cost** PDFs to locate:
 - a. Required education level (certificate, associate, bachelor's, master's, doctorate, licensing, etc.)
 - b. Estimated total cost of the program you would like to attend
3. Answer the reflection questions.

- 1 Career Title: _____
- 2 Required Education Level: _____
- 3 Gross Annual Income: \$ _____

Education, Training, or Entry Pathway

- What preparation is required to enter this field? (degree, certificate, apprenticeship, internship, military training, licensing, on-the-job training, etc.)

- Estimated total pathway cost: (Enter \$0 if no additional education or training is required.)

- Institution, organization, or pathway researched (name or type):

Funding Plan

- If costs are required, how do you plan to pay for them? (Check all that apply.)
 - ☐ Savings
 - ☐ Grants or scholarships
 - ☐ Student loans
 - ☐ Work-based learning (Work during school or training)
 - ☐ Employer-sponsored training
 - ☐ Family support
 - ☐ Military benefits
 - ☐ N/A
 - ☐ Other: _____
- Which source will cover the largest portion of your cost, and why?
- What makes this funding plan realistic?

Reflection Questions

- How might this pathway affect your Year 1 income, obligations, or timeline?

- Why is this pathway the right choice for you at this point in your life?
- How does this pathway support your future goals?
- What trade-off are you accepting by choosing this pathway?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

Benefits Enrollment Decision

What + Why: Choose your benefits—and see how protection and planning shape your real income.

Supporting Materials:

The Benefits of Benefits (FinanceFolio, Unit 1)

Instructions:

1. Review the Benefits Enrollment Memo.
2. You may refer to **The Benefits of Benefits** reflection in your FinanceFolio to revisit how benefits, compensation, and financial trade-offs influence long-term financial outcomes.
3. Compare the medical plan options, including premiums, deductibles, coinsurance, and out-of-pocket maximums.
4. Select the medical plan that best fits your financial situation and comfort with risk.
5. Decide whether you will enroll in the 401(k) plan and choose your contribution percentage (0–4%).
6. Complete the Benefits Selection section, explaining your choices using specific cost details from the memo.



BENEFITS ENROLLMENT MEMO

To: All Employees

From: Human Resources

Subject: Time to Choose Your Job Benefits

As part of your compensation package, you are eligible to select job benefits for the upcoming year.

You have two weeks to enroll in benefits. Coverage elections will take effect on January 1 and remain in place for the full plan year. The cost of these benefits will be deducted from each paycheck before taxes are calculated.

Please review the following options and submit your selections by the enrollment deadline.

Health Insurance Options

All of the following premiums reflect the employee cost per pay period.

Coverage Tier	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Employee Only Premium	\$75	\$130	\$195
Employee + Spouse Premium	\$210	\$290	\$365
Family	\$285	\$360	\$440
Deductibles			
Employee	\$3,000	\$1,500	\$750
Family	\$6,000	\$3,000	\$1,500
Co-pays			
Office Visit	20% after deductible	\$35	\$25
Specialist	20% after deductible	\$60	\$40
ER Visit	20% after deductible	\$300	\$250
Prescription (Generic)	20% after deductible	\$20	\$15

(continued)

Coinsurance	60% After deductible	70% After deductible	80% After deductible
Out-of-Pocket Max (Individual)	\$7,500	\$5,500	\$3,750
Out-of-Pocket Max (Family)	\$15,000	\$11,000	\$7,500

Additional Benefits

Benefit	Employee Cost (per pay period)	What's Covered
Dental	\$18 (Employee) / \$45 (Family)	Exams & cleanings (100%); Basic (80%); Major (50%)
Vision	\$12 (Employee) / \$25 (Family)	Annual exam; \$150 frame allowance; Contact allowance
401(k)	You choose contribution amount.	100% match on first 4% of salary contributed

Please submit your selections by the end of next week.

Remember: The choices you make determine how protected you are financially and how your income works for you beyond your paycheck.

Benefits Selection

Medical Plan: (select only one)

Bronze	Silver	Gold	Opt Out
Employee Only Premium ☐ \$75	Employee Only Premium ☐ \$130	Employee Only Premium ☐ \$195	Select to decline medical benefits. ☐
Employee + Spouse Premium ☐ \$210	Employee + Spouse Premium ☐ \$290	Employee + Spouse Premium ☐ \$365	
Family ☐ \$285	Family ☐ \$360	Family ☐ \$440	

(continued)

Additional Benefits: (Select any that you wish to participate in.)

Dental	Vision	401(K) Contribution	Opt Out
Employee Only Premium ☐ \$18	Employee Only Premium ☐ \$12	Enter your percentage _____ %	Select to decline dental, vision, and 401(k) benefits.
Family ☐ \$45	Family ☐ \$25	(\$_____ per pay period)	☐

Cost Calculation

Multiply each premium by 2 to determine the approximate monthly cost (Assume biweekly payroll deductions.).

- Monthly Cost of Selected Benefits (pre-tax): \$_____
- Multiply that number by 12 to get an approximate annual cost.
 - Annual Cost of Selected Benefits (pre-tax): \$_____
- Gross Annual Income: \$_____ **3**
- Taxable Income (Gross Annual Income – Annual Cost of Selected Benefits):
\$_____ **4**

Note: This calculation uses 24 pay periods to keep the math straightforward. In a real biweekly payroll schedule, you would typically have 26 pay periods per year, which means your actual annual benefit cost may be slightly higher than what is calculated here.

Reflection Questions

- Why did you choose these benefits, or why did you opt out? (Explain your reasoning using specific cost details from the memo.)
- What financial trade-off(s) are you accepting by selecting what you did?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

Paycheck Shift

What + Why: Calculate your projected take-home pay after taxes and benefits deductions, weigh it against your education or training costs, and evaluate whether your chosen pathway delivers a worthwhile financial return.

A salary is only part of the story. Once benefits, taxes, and education costs are applied, your projected income becomes a clearer financial starting point. This activity helps you examine what your pathway actually provides and what it requires so your plan is built on informed trade-offs rather than assumptions.

Supporting Materials:

What Your Path Costs (previously completed)

Benefits Enrollment Decision (previously completed)

**Instructions:****1. Part 1:**

- Complete the fields identified by the numbered callout boxes. These values will be transferred to Checkpoint 2: Starting Line Snapshot in your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**.
- Using the taxable income you calculated in the **Benefits Enrollment Decision** activity, review the Tax Rules Reference Guide provided to calculate the following employee withholdings:
 - Federal tax bracket
 - Social Security
 - Medicare
 - State tax (if applicable)

- If you plan to be a contract gig worker or entrepreneur, you are responsible for paying the full Social Security and Medicare tax amounts.
- Add the total withholdings and subtract them from your taxable income to determine your net annual income.

2. **Part 2:**

- Record your previously calculated education cost from the **What Your Path Costs** activity:
 - If you borrowed, use the total amount repaid over 10 years at 6% interest.
 - If you did not borrow, use the full tuition amount.

3. **Part 3:**

- Respond to the reflection questions.

Tax Rules Reference Guide

These are common taxes that reduce take-home pay. The rules below determine when the tax applies and who is required to pay it.

Federal income tax

A tax collected by the federal government based on taxable income.

% Rate (progressive tax brackets)

Rates depend on your taxable income.

Tax brackets (single filers)

Taxable income	Tax rate
Up to \$11,925	10%
\$11,926 – \$48,475	12%
\$48,476 – \$103,350	22%
\$103,351 – \$197,300	24%
\$197,301 – \$256,225	32%
\$256,226 – \$640,600	35%
Over \$640,600	37%

When it applies

Withheld from paychecks throughout the year.

Who must pay

Most workers earning income above the federal filing threshold.

\$ Pay stub label

Federal income tax / Fed withholding

State income tax

A tax collected by some state governments based on income.

% Rate

Varies by state.
Ranges from 0% to 13.3%.
Some states have no income tax.

When it applies

Withheld from paychecks in states that collect income tax.

Not required in states with no income tax.

Who must pay

Workers who live in a state that collects income tax and earn income above that state's filing threshold.

\$ Pay stub label

State income tax / State withholding

Social Security Tax (FICA)

A federal payroll tax that funds retirement, disability, and survivor benefits.

% Tax rate overview

If you work for an employer

From your paycheck (you pay):

6.2%

Your employer also pays:

6.2%

Total going to Social Security:

12.4% of wages

If you are self-employed

You pay the full **12.4%** yourself.

When it applies

Withheld from paychecks. Self-employed workers pay this amount directly.

Who must pay

Most workers earning wages or self-employment income.

\$ Pay stub label

Social Security / FICA

Medicare tax (FICA)

A federal payroll tax that funds Medicare health coverage.

% Tax rate overview

If you work for an employer

From your paycheck (you pay):

1.45%

Your employer also pays:

1.45%

Total going to Medicare:

2.9% of wages

If you are self-employed

You pay the full **2.9%** yourself.

When it applies

Withheld from paychecks. Self-employed workers pay this amount directly.

Who must pay

Most workers earning wages or self-employment income.

\$ Pay stub label

Medicare / FICA

Note: The federal income tax brackets shown reflect 2026 rates for single filers as released by the IRS. Social Security (6.2%) and Medicare (1.45%) rates have remained stable since 1990 and 1994 respectively, but may be subject to change by Congress. Always check the IRS website (<https://www.irs.gov/>) for the most current rates before using these figures for real financial planning.

1 Career Selected: _____

2 Required Education Level: _____

Part 1: Tax Withholdings (Employee)

3 Gross Annual Income: _____

4 Taxable Income (Gross Annual Income – Annual Cost of Benefits):

Deduction Type	Rate Used	Calculation	Amount Withheld
Federal Income Tax	_____%	\$_____ × _____	\$_____
Social Security	_____%	\$_____ × _____	\$_____
Medicare	_____%	\$_____ × _____	\$_____
State Tax (if applicable)	_____%	\$_____ × _____	\$_____
			Total \$_____

Taxable Income: \$_____ – Total Taxes Withheld: \$_____

= Net Annual Income: \$_____ **5**

Part 2: Take-Home Pay & Education Cost

Choose the option that applies to you:

- **Option 1: If You Borrowed**

- Use the total amount you will repay over 10 years at 6% interest.
 - If you used the **Education Costs** handout to look up costs, record the "Total Repaid Over 10 Years (6%)" amount.
 - If you researched online or independently, use the following formula to calculate interest: $\text{Total Repaid} \approx \text{Amount Borrowed} \times 1.33$.

- **Option 2: If You Did Not Borrow**

- Use the full tuition amount as your total education cost.

Education Cost: \$_____ **6**

Part 3: Reflection Questions

1. Approximately how many years of your net annual income would equal your total education cost? What does that timeline suggest about your starting point?
2. After accounting for benefits and taxes, how different does your income feel compared to the original salary estimate? What changed your perspective most?

3. Based on these numbers, what will matter most in your first year after entering this career: income level, managing expenses, avoiding debt, or something else? Explain.

Key Terms

- **gross annual income (GAI):** total pay or earnings made over a one-year period before any deductions have been taken
- **net annual income (NAI):** income amount remaining after a year's worth of deductions have been taken

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

INSTRUCTION

Climbing the Pay Ladder

What + Why: Knowing how raises typically work helps you build a realistic 10-year income plan.

Instructions:

1. Use this page to record key ideas during instruction.

Type of Income Increase	Typical Percentage	What determines whether someone receives this?
Merit Increase	_____ % to _____ %	
Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)	_____ % to _____ %	
Promotion	_____ % to _____ %	
Job Change	_____ % to _____ %	

- Can an employee typically receive both a COLA and a merit increase in the same year? Explain.
- Are income increases guaranteed every year? Explain.
- Which types of increases usually create gradual growth, and which create larger jumps?

Key Terms

- **merit increase:** a salary increase based on an employee's performance and how well they meet or exceed expectations
- **cost-of-living adjustment (COLA):** a salary increase intended to help employees keep up with prices rising due to inflation

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

The Breaking Point

What + Why: When life throws a curveball, a strong financial plan knows how to adjust.

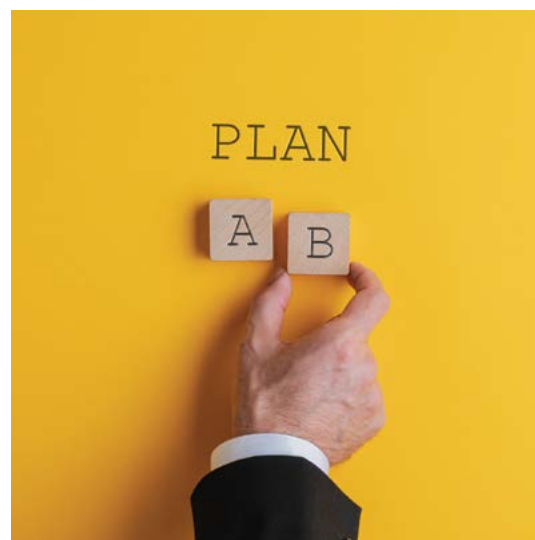
Instructions:

1. Select one of the four disruptions discussed earlier and use it to stress-test your **My 10-Year Financial Plan** by analyzing how the disruption would affect your plan and how you would respond.
2. Identify the changes you would make to strengthen your plan moving forward.

Choose one disruption:

- ☐ You lose your job and have no income for 2 months.
- ☐ You change jobs, but it pays \$5,000 less per year than planned.
- ☐ Your car breaks down and repairs cost \$4,000.
- ☐ A family member needs \$300 per month in financial support for 12 months.

- Why would this disruption be challenging for your 10-year financial plan?



- Which specific parts of your **My 10-Year Financial Plan** would be affected most? Use details from your financial plan to fill out the chart:

Part of Plan	Impact of Disruption	Response (actions and strategies)
Income		
Expenses		
Savings Goals		
Debt Repayment		
Financial Milestones		

Character Compass Connection

- Which Character Compass trait would help guide your response? (Consider whether this is your True North trait.)
- How would this trait influence your decisions?

- What changes will you make to your **My 10-Year Financial Plan** based on what you learned from this stress test? For each revision, explain why it would make your plan more resilient.

Planned Revision	Why Would This Strengthen Your Plan?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

Spot the Gaps

What + Why: Strong plans are built through testing, feedback, and revision.

**Instructions:**

1. Exchange the stress test you completed during **The Breaking Point** activity with a partner.
2. Review your partner's analysis and planned revisions.
3. Use the following review criteria to evaluate your partner's stress test:
 - Does the analysis explain how the disruption affects specific parts of the plan?
 - Are the response strategies realistic and connected to the disruption?
 - Do the planned revisions address the vulnerabilities identified in the stress test?
4. Discuss your observations and recommendations with your partner.
5. Provide feedback on one strength and one opportunity to strengthen the plan.

As you listen to your partner's feedback, record notes that will help you strengthen your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**.

- One strength my partner identified in my stress test:

- One vulnerability, assumption, or gap my partner noticed:

- What revision or improvement will I make to strengthen my plan?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

Strengthen the Plan

What + Why: The strongest financial plans evolve when new challenges reveal opportunities for improvement.

Financial plans are not meant to stay the same forever. New challenges can reveal weaknesses, unexpected risks, or opportunities to make better decisions. Use the insights you gained to strengthen your plan. Focus on making revisions that improve your plan's ability to support your goals and respond to future financial challenges.

Supporting Materials:

My 10-Year Financial Plan (previously completed)

The Breaking Point (previously completed)

Spot the Gaps (previously completed)

Instructions:

1. Review the analysis you completed during **The Breaking Point** activity and the peer feedback you received during **Spot the Gaps**.
2. Revise your **My 10-Year Financial Plan** to incorporate changes that strengthen the plan.
3. Ensure your character traits and True North trait from your Character Compass still apply. Adapt them as needed.
4. Update any goals, strategies, timelines, or financial decisions that no longer align with your revised plan.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

REFLECTION

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

What + Why: Strong plans are not built all at once—they improve through trial and error, lived experience, reflection, feedback, and revision.



Before completing this reflection, think about the revisions you made to your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**. Consider what you learned from **The Breaking Point** and the feedback you received during **Spot the Gaps**. Reflect on how your plan changed and what those changes reveal about effective financial planning.

Reflect

What is the most important change you made to your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**, and why does that change make your plan stronger?

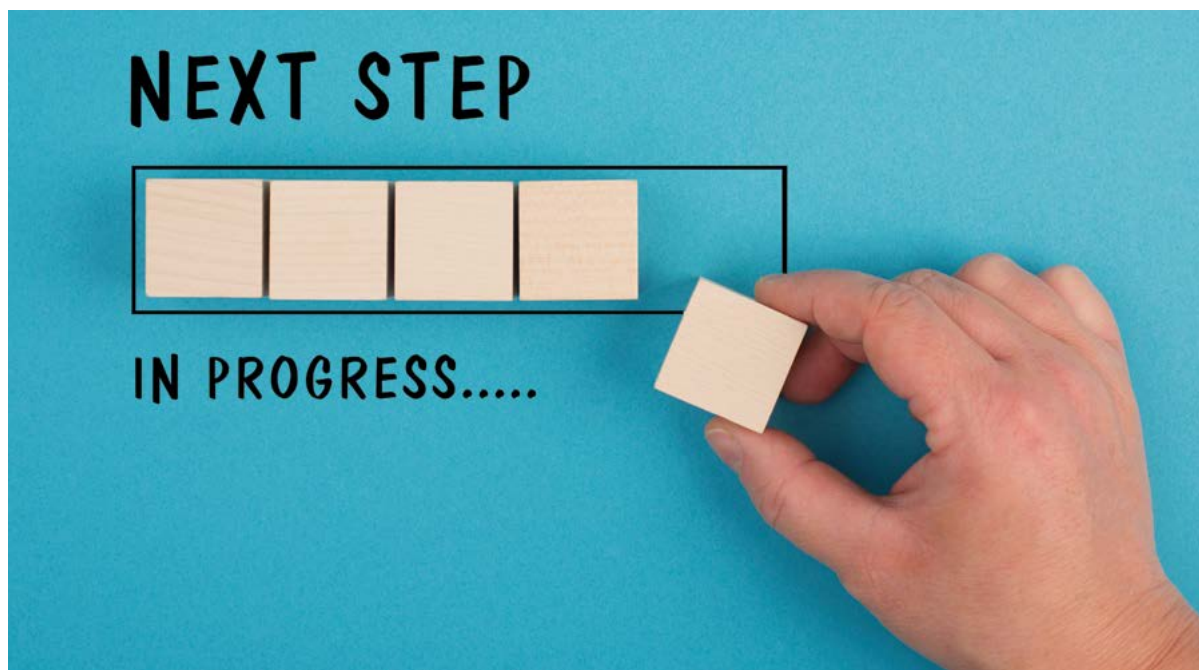
NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

Your Plan, Your Why

What + Why: Every choice in your financial plan has a purpose. Now it's time to bring that story together.

**Instructions:**

1. Review your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**, your disruption analysis from **The Breaking Point** activity, and the feedback you received during **Spot the Gaps**.
2. Complete the Presentation Planning Guide provided.
3. Use evidence from your financial plan, stress test, and peer feedback to explain the decisions, trade-offs, and revisions that shaped your plan.
4. Prepare to present and defend your plan by anticipating questions about your decisions, trade-offs, and assumptions.

Presentation Planning Guide

1. Who Are You?

- What Character Compass trait(s) had the greatest influence on your financial decisions?

Self	Others	Community
☐ adaptability ☐ confidence ☐ courage ☐ hope ☐ initiative ☐ resilience ☐ responsibility ☐ self-control	☐ connectedness ☐ empathy ☐ fairness ☐ generosity ☐ gratitude ☐ honesty ☐ kindness ☐ teamwork	☐ contribution ☐ purpose ☐ respect

- Was it your True North trait, as you predicted?
- How did these character trait(s) influence your financial plan?

2. Where Are You Starting?

- What is one important detail from your Starting Line Snapshot that influenced your financial plan?
- Why was this factor important?

3. Key Financial Decisions

What are the two most important financial decisions you made in your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**?

- Decision #1:
 - Why did you make this decision?

- Decision #2:
 - Why did you make this decision?

4. **A Trade-Off You Had to Make**

- Describe one important trade-off in your financial plan.
 - I chose to:

 - Instead of:

 - Why was this trade-off necessary?

5. The Breaking Point

- Which disruption did you use during **The Breaking Point**?
 - ☐ Job loss
 - ☐ Lower salary
 - ☐ Major car repair
 - ☐ Family financial support
- What did the stress test reveal about your plan?
- What changes did you make as a result?

6. Defend Your Plan

- Why do you believe this financial plan is realistic, resilient, and aligned with your goals and values?

7. Prepare for Questions

- What is one decision, trade-off, or assumption that someone may question?
- How would you defend that choice?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

Making the Case

What + Why: Get a fresh perspective on your plan and discover where your reasoning is strongest.

Supporting Materials:

My 10-Year Financial Plan

The Breaking Point (previously completed)

Spot the Gaps (previously completed)

Your Plan, Your Why (contains the Presentation Planning Guide, previously completed)

Instructions:

1. Present your financial plan to your partner using your Presentation Planning Guide.
2. As you listen to your partner's plan:
 - Provide one specific strength you noticed.
 - Ask one question about a decision, trade-off, or assumption that your partner should explain or defend further.
3. Record the feedback you receive and identify what you will clarify, strengthen, or explain more clearly in your final presentation.

As you listen to your partner's feedback, record notes that will help you strengthen your final presentation.

- What part of your presentation or explanation was most effective?
- What decision, trade-off, or assumption did your partner ask you to explain or defend further?
- What will you clarify, strengthen, or explain more clearly in your final presentation?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ACTIVITY

Defend Your Future

What + Why: Defend your plan by explaining the decisions, trade-offs, and revisions that shaped it.

Supporting Materials:

My 10-Year Financial Plan (previously completed)

Your Plan, Your Why (contains the Presentation Planning Guide, previously completed)

Instructions:

1. Present your **My 10-Year Financial Plan** to your group using your Presentation Planning Guide.
2. Explain the decisions, trade-offs, and revisions that shaped your plan.
3. After each presentation, each peer provides:
 - One specific strength they noticed in the plan.
 - One decision, trade-off, or assumption they would like the presenter to explain or defend further.
4. Respond to questions using evidence from your financial plan, Character Compass/True North trait, stress test, revisions, and planning process.



NAME: _____

DATE: _____

REFLECTION

The Takeaway

What + Why: Financial plans become stronger when personal values, realistic starting points, and strategies for uncertainty work together.

Think about the decisions, challenges, feedback, and revisions that shaped your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**. Consider what this experience taught you about building a financial plan that can support your goals and adapt when circumstances change.

Reflect

Using evidence from your **My 10-Year Financial Plan**, write a final reflection that answers our **Case Question/Guiding Question**:

- How can you build a realistic 10-year financial plan that reflects your values, starts from an honest picture of your current financial situation, and is built to withstand life's uncertainties?

In your response, explain:

- How your Character Compass/True North trait influenced at least two specific financial decisions in your plan.
- How your Starting Line Snapshot helped you build a realistic plan and what adjustments you made because of it.
- What your stress test revealed about your plan's vulnerabilities and how your strategies would help you respond.
- How your overall financial plan might need to change in the future and what you learned in this case challenge that will help you adapt.



