

# A Day in the Life of the Poor

---

**Description:** For many families living in poverty, life presents new challenges each day. In order to gain a deeper understanding of experiences faced by people living below the poverty line, you will be given a situation that portrays a typical day in the life of someone struggling to make ends meet.

**Directions:** You will work with a partner for part of the class period to develop a plan for dealing with this average day in the life of someone living on the edge of poverty. Together, you and your group will write a detailed plan for how your family will solve the problem it is presented.

**Scenario:** You are married with two children, a 4-year old daughter and an 8-year old son. You work as a home health aide for a wage of \$9 per hour, taking care of seniors who need help with daily living activities such as dressing, eating, and bathing. After taxes, your income totals \$14,000 a year. After paying rent and utilities, you have just \$22.00 left over each day to take care of your family's needs. You and your spouse try to save a little money, but something always comes up and drains the piggy bank. You have no savings and live paycheck to paycheck, just like everyone you know. Your spouse cannot work because of a back injury, but fortunately you don't have to pay for childcare for your daughter.



**Today's Problem:** You are planning your expenses for the following day. You need to buy food for all three meals for the family. Your daughter has a fever and needs medicine. You need to have money for the bus fare to and from work tomorrow. Your son accidentally tore the bottom of his shoe on the way home from school, and that is the only pair of shoes he can wear during the cold months. What will you spend your money on? You have \$22.00 in your wallet, and no money saved in the bank. Together, you and your partner need to make a list of how you will spend your money and meet the needs of your family. Don't just create a shopping list, but rather explain the menu for each meal (with a price for each item) and record other expenses. Write the grand total clearly at the top of the page. You can use the back of this paper to write your list.

## Price List

Apples: 75 cents each  
Bananas: 50 cents each  
Lettuce: \$2.50 for a bag (Need 1 bag for a main course)  
Carrots: \$1.50/bag of 30 carrots  
Bread: \$1.99/loaf  
Butter: \$3.50/one-lb. package  
Peanut Butter: \$3.00/jar  
Canned beans: 85 cents each (Need 3 for a main course)  
Canned soup: \$1.50 each (Need 3 for a main course)  
Cereal: \$3.50/box  
Chicken: \$3.29/lb. (Need 2 lbs. for a main course)  
Eggs: \$2/dozen  
Hamburger: \$2.49/lb. (Need 2 lbs. for a main course)  
Cheese: \$2.99/one-pound package  
Yogurt: 89 cents/individual cup  
Rice: \$1.00/box  
Tuna fish: \$1.50/can  
Salad Dressing: \$1.75/bottle  
Jelly: \$1.75/jar  
Bus fare: \$2.00, each way  
Medicine: \$5 per package  
Shoes: \$10 (cheapest available)

# A Day in the Life of the Poor

---

## **Reflection:**

On a separate piece of paper or in a group discussion, reflect on the choices you made. What was the most difficult choice? Why? Did you have to make a sacrifice in order to meet the needs of your family? If you were the 8-year old and opened your lunch box today to discover the lunch your parents had made for you, would you be satisfied?

Think about people living in poverty who come home every day to realize he/she cannot fully meet the needs of their family. Would you be willing to do the things you've suggested this family do? Why or why not?