

Using the *Quick Start Guides*

Quick Start Guides accompany each of the financial literacy case studies. These documents are a guide to teachers planning their instructional approach to the cases, but these guides are not lesson plans. They do not lay out a rigid, step-by-step sequence of prescribed activities that must be followed in order for the cases to work. You know your students. You know how they learn, and you know their unique needs better than we do. The guides don't dictate a single way to teach the cases and they don't emphasize right answers to the complex dilemmas presented in the cases. Instead, they offer a set of tools and examples that will help you adapt the cases to work you are already doing with your students, and to their particular academic strengths and challenges, through a mixed menu of activities and extensions that tweak the cases in significant ways.

How to Use the Guides

The Dilemma Map

Consistent with the principles of the case study approach, an essential dilemma lies at the heart of each case. The cases, which incorporate financial literacy topics, terms, and concepts, compel students to grapple with an urgent financial problem. A dilemma is, by definition, a hard choice, an undesirable choice, a predicament.¹ The dilemma at the heart of each case, the set of circumstances that surrounds the problem, is what makes the problem hard to solve. As in life, the protagonists have a mix of priorities and even when the principles of personal finance are well understood, in practice, each choice has a trade-off.

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dilemma>

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In working to solve the cases, students will use concepts and terms they have learned previously and, at the same time, respond to the demands of the case for new information. Like the real-world problems on which they are based, there are trade-offs and opportunity costs. As with real-world problems, the cases require students to grapple with uncertainty and with multiple points of view. The terms and concepts defined in the cases, as well as the resources that accompany the cases, offer students the knowledge and tools to tackle the dilemma logically and systematically.

To guide you and your students through this process, each Quick Start Guide includes a “dilemma map.” It is a visualization, a snapshot, of what the problem might look like from 5 miles up. The map takes the problem, or what appears to be the problem, as its starting point and surrounds it with the elements that make it hard—the details of the situation, the competing priorities, and (as if peeling back a layer) the complications that might make it even harder to solve. We use this visualization because, prior to analyzing a case and putting things in order, students need to understand the problem holistically. Paying good attention to it will spare students the mistake of grabbing one end of the dilemma and working on a solution before they get the big picture. The map captures that messy stew of elements, options, and demands that might be keeping the decision makers up at night.

At the end of this guide you will find three examples of dilemma maps. They use problems unrelated to the cases and are included for illustration purposes. Each gives a picture of what maps should include and should be useful in introducing this tool to students. As a next step, consider working with your students to develop a map of a knotty decision in their own lives—where to go to college, what job to take, what kind of car to buy, or even whether to go with an iPhone or an Android. Assure yourself that they understand the tool. Working in small groups, students then develop maps of the case study as a way of building out their understanding of the dilemma at its heart. This process also provides you with a way of assessing their learning, the richness of their discussion, and their grasp of the case’s details.

The Quick Start Guide for each case has a completed map of the actual case problem. This version of the map may be useful as a tool for you to use when the discussion needs a nudge or as a guide to assessing the students’ work. Stipulating first that, although it is a good representation of the dilemma, it is not the only “right answer,” you may elect to share the completed case map with students when they have finished their own work. They should find it useful to compare their thinking with an outside perspective.

Sections of the Quick Start Guides

Each Quick Start Guide opens with some additional background on the subject matter of the case to provide teachers with context, beyond what is included in the cases themselves, on why the financial literacy topics discussed are so important to students' lives. The guides then describe the dilemma in words and provide a summary and set of brief definitions for the skills and concepts students will learn in the case.

The “In the Classroom” section provides some suggestions for grouping strategies, discussion prompts, debriefing exercises, and extensions and adaptations to the cases to manage the flow of information and keep all students actively engaged in the process.

The guides also provide a “Complicating Factors” section of facts and research findings for students to consider. They are included because they usually suggest that the resolution to each case is often not as simple as it initially appears. They should be introduced when it is apparent from the discussion that students are simplifying too quickly and converging on one solution before considering other points of view or gathering sufficient information.

Finally, several guides include organizers to help manage the complexity of information in the cases. These are tables that students can use to help process the information from the case and provide structure to the mapping discussion and, ultimately, some simplification to the decision making.

A Successful Case Study Lesson

We are confident that the case study approach will be an engaging and challenging experience for your students. By working through the cases to create financially literate solutions to problems that are intrinsically interesting, students will master literacy concepts that are authentic and lasting. As they continue working with dilemmas, engaging in group discussion, asking questions, and seeking out new information through the resources in the cases, students will gain confidence and facility with the case study approach. You will observe this through:

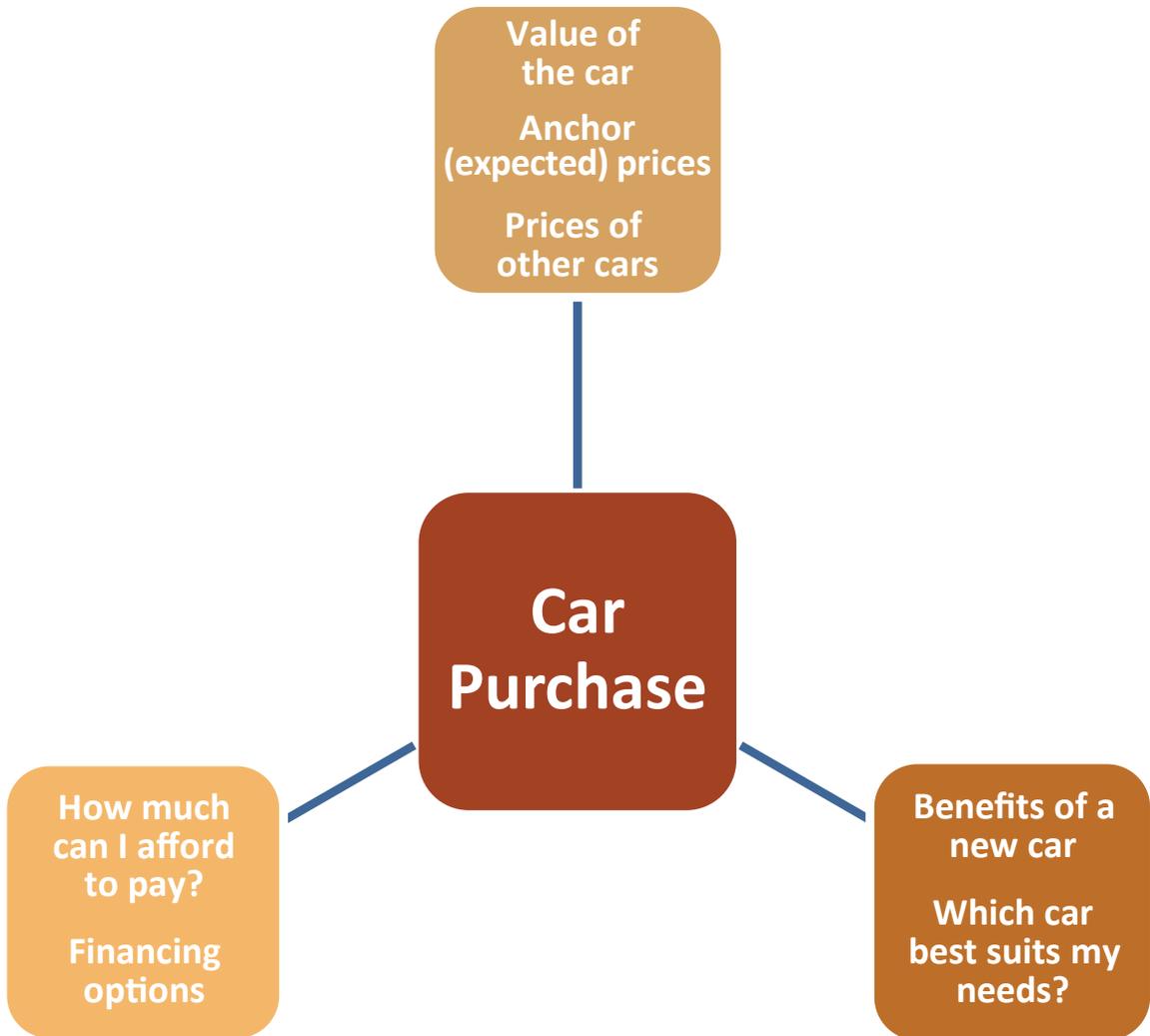
- Increasingly thoughtful and complex dilemma maps as students engage in multiple cases.
- An increasing emphasis on questions, with students asking one another more and more.

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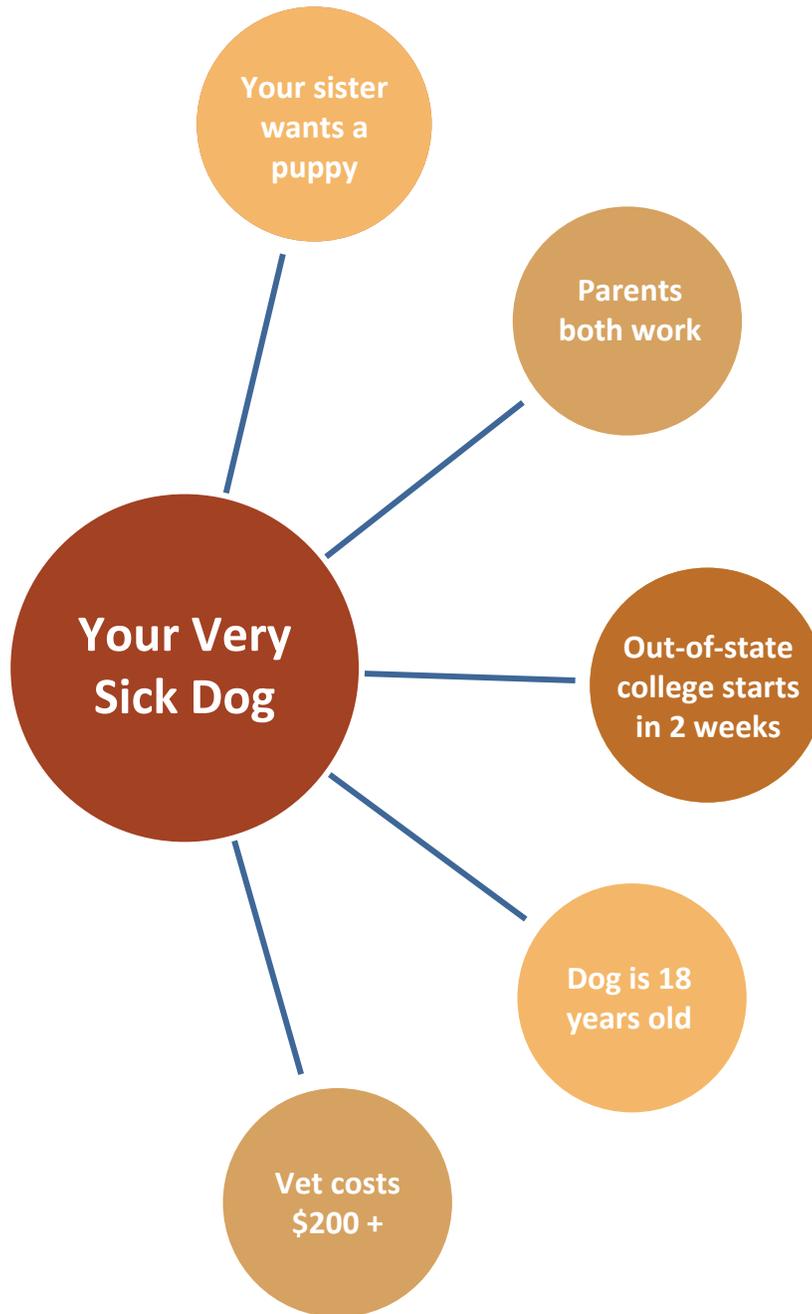
- Prolonged discussion, with students taking more time and considering more options before converging on a solution.
- More systematic discussion, with students using the dilemma maps, organizers, and financial literacy concepts and terms to weigh options and points of view in a logical, organized fashion.
- Engagement with probability and uncertainty, as students begin recognizing what is known, what is uncertain (and the range of likelihood of various outcomes), and what is unknown.
- An increased tolerance for ambiguity. Students will get a sense of satisfaction from the process of solving a problem that has no one right answer.

Because this work will be new to most students, they might not realize that they are getting better at it. Making their progress explicit will reinforce their growing mastery.

Sample Dilemma Map 1



Sample Dilemma Map 2



Sample Dilemma Map 3

