# What Moves Choices

Trace how rewards and costs shape cafeteria decisions.

**E.1.2** "Identify incentives and explain how they influence economic behavior and decision-making."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Circle four benefits or costs that could change a student's choice, then draw an arrow from each one to the behavior it might encourage or discourage.

### The Bowl Experiment

1. At Westview High, the cafeteria used to serve every lunch in a disposable bowl. The student council wanted fewer bowls in the trash, so it tested a returnable bowl option. A student could pay a $3 deposit at lunch and get the full $3 back after returning the bowl to a collection cart. During the first week, several students said they returned their bowls because they wanted their money back. Others kept using disposable bowls because they did not want to carry a used bowl between classes. The cafeteria did not charge a deposit for disposable bowls.

2. The council then invited students to bring a clean container from home. Anyone who did so paid 50 cents less for the same lunch. Maya began packing a container because she bought lunch four days a week and wanted to save $2 each week. Her friend Leo tried it once but stopped. Washing the container at home added a chore to his evening, and he valued that time more than the discount. The price of lunch did not change for students using the returnable bowls. Students could still choose any of the three serving options.

3. Finally, the council announced a monthlong contest: if at least 300 returnable bowls were brought back, the cafeteria would serve a popular dessert on the last Friday. Some students started reminding friends to return bowls, hoping the group would reach the goal. But the collection cart sat near the gym, far from the exit used by bus riders. Nia, who took the bus, said the extra walk might make her miss her ride. She chose a disposable bowl on days when she had to leave quickly. The council moved the cart closer to the bus exit the next week.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the $3 deposit influence some students' decisions about returning bowls?

2. Why did the 50-cent discount change Maya's behavior but not Leo's?

3. How did the promised dessert affect students' behavior, even though no single student could earn it alone?

4. Why might moving the collection cart change Nia's choice on days she takes the bus?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Think of a decision outside the cafeteria. In four or five sentences, describe one person facing two incentives that pull in different directions, explain how each could affect the person's behavior, and predict what the person chooses and why.

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## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle four benefits or costs that could change a student's choice, then draw an arrow from each one to the behavior it might encourage or discourage. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did the $3 deposit influence some students' decisions about returning bowls? | **Students could get their $3 back by returning a bowl, so some returned theirs rather than losing the deposit.** |
| 2 | Why did the 50-cent discount change Maya's behavior but not Leo's? | **Maya valued saving $2 over four lunches each week and began bringing a container. Leo valued the time he would spend washing it more than the discount, so he stopped.** |
| 3 | How did the promised dessert affect students' behavior, even though no single student could earn it alone? | **The group reward led some students to remind friends to return bowls so they could reach the 300-bowl goal.** |
| 4 | Why might moving the collection cart change Nia's choice on days she takes the bus? | **A cart closer to the bus exit would reduce the extra walk that made Nia worry about missing her ride, so she might be more willing to use a returnable bowl.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Jordan is deciding whether to work an extra Saturday shift at a bookstore. The manager offers $45 in extra pay, which makes the shift more attractive because Jordan is saving for a bike. The shift would also mean missing a team practice, which makes it less attractive because Jordan wants to start in the next game. Jordan chooses practice because a chance to earn a starting spot matters more to Jordan than $45 right now.

Accept responses that identify a specific benefit or cost and explain how it could change a choice. For the final task, both incentives must relate to the same decision and pull in opposite directions.