



Handling Money

As my three children have grown the way they save and handle money has changed dramatically. The world we live in today is almost totally electronic and quite different from when they were young. They started out as toddlers with money boxes, saving coins and small amounts of pocket money. As they became a little more aware, I discovered ATM money box saving machines. These are great birthday or Christmas gift ideas for children from 5 – 10 years of age and a fun way to start teaching them about saving. Depositing coins or paper money they can see their money grow, adding up with each new deposit. Money targets can be set and each one comes with a plastic card and pin number creating the feeling of independence.



Along the way I realised how different each child is with money and understanding them has been key in helping them to save and achieve their goals. Each one has quite a different approach and style of saving - or not! My eldest daughter is happy to enjoy and share whatever money she has and spends it quickly on simple pleasures. Rarely does she buy anything without treating someone else and she finds immense pleasure in giving. She gives with such generosity that, at times, her savings have been depleted to almost nothing. Making sure she's not taken advantage of, whilst allowing her the joy of giving and helping her to save is a fine balance.

My son has always reminded me of a little squirrel, saving up for a rainy day in his early years, hiding coins and birthday money in different pots. Now, aged 11, he has two gardening jobs and recently contributed £500 towards a new PC. He's extremely motivated and resourceful when his mind is set, but such discipline in single-minded saving can take away the fun and joy of buying simple things.

A couple of years ago I found an app called Rooster Money which gives the option of virtual or real money savings accounts for each child. These apps have some great features, for example weekly or monthly pocket money. Chores when completed can be paid in individually or as part of pocket money earnings. Pictures of tidy bedrooms (or anything else) can be sent for approval before their money goes in. This is great fun for eight years upwards, a good way of motivating the child and can be downloaded onto any phone or tablet giving the child a good example of online banking for the future. As each child has moved up to high school, these accounts have been transferred to real money. They each have a debit card giving them independence but the parent gets notified when, where and how much was spent in each transaction. Access to online shopping is available, with the parent having a complete overview and control, but giving the child freedom to learn important money skills in preparation for adulthood.



Some children prefer cash. My youngest loves to count her money, choosing to hide her savings away whilst enjoying the generosity of her older sister for treats! When paid for a gardening job in cash my son faithfully hands it over, taking pleasure seeing it grow in his account rather than holding on to it and avoiding the temptation to spend. Being aware that the eldest could feel inadequate with a younger sibling who is quite an entrepreneur, she has a small monthly allowance for jobs, giving her value in her own right. The option of extra jobs to make money is also available and reassurance that when the time is right she will make her own money.



They all love being independent, having the option to spend or save as they wish but being guided along the way. Talking through options before making their decisions and allowing them to make mistakes has been important too. Encouraging them to do extra jobs for family members and giving them incentives to keep going when they feel disheartened are all things we've put in place to help teach them about earning, saving and spending. Most of all we want to help them understand themselves in preparation for their future.

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