

Trillion Dollar Stimulus Package  
NewsDepth February 12, 2009  
Classroom Activities

**Overview:**

We are dealing in big numbers these days in the United States. In fact, it's not uncommon to hear a politician, or economist or media source throw out the term "trillion" in some form during any given day. Our deficit is more than 8 trillion, we will have spent 3 trillion on the war in Iraq, and the president's stimulus package is pushing a trillion dollars. Just how big is a trillion dollars? The classroom activities in this lesson will help students discover the answer.



**Grade level:** 4-5

**Subject:** Math

**Standards:**

Students will be able to solve problems involving counting money.

Students will be able to demonstrate fluency in multiplying and dividing whole numbers.

**Classroom Activities:**

**1. Activity #1 Those Are Some Big Numbers**

- Just how much is "a lot?"  
How much is a lot of money? (answers, of course, will vary)  
If you could win a lot of money in the lottery, how much would you say is a lot?  
If you could set the amount of your allowance, any amount, how much would you like to have? What would you do with all of that money? How many of you would save it? How many of you would spend it?
- Our government has been spending a lot of money these days. Can you tell me some of the things the government has to spend money on?
- President Obama's stimulus package is pushing a trillion dollars! Just how big is a trillion dollars? Actually a trillion is the largest number that's ever been dealt with in the history of the world.
- Go back and watch the NewsDepth feature about the stimulus and get an idea from the numbers presented in the video
- Watch the following video produced by History Buster's TimeLine of Truth. She presents the concept of a trillion in terms of time. She is using the World's Longest Timeline to help students conceptualize a million, a billion, and a trillion.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2rRHqbgdQ0&feature=related>

- Distribute the factual handout and go over some of the amazing facts about “Just how much is a trillion?”
- Challenge students to work in pairs and come up with their own amazing fact that could be added to the list.
- Another video does a very good job of explaining just how much a trillion is: <http://www.chrismartenson.com/crashcourse/chapter-11-how-much-trillion> fast forward to 2:45 into the video.

## 2. Activity #2 The Mega Penny Project

- Go to <http://www.kokogjak.com/megapenny/default.asp>
- The **Mega Penny Project** aims to help by taking one small everyday item, the U.S. penny, and building on that to answer the question: "What would a billion (or a trillion) pennies look like?"
- Have students see the enormous size of one trillion pennies stacked up.

## 3. Activity #3 You Do the Math

- Imagine that as part of the stimulus package, the president decides to give everyone in the United States an equal part of One Trillion Dollars. Let's estimate the population to be 305,000,000. How much money would each person get?
- If you made a million dollars a day. It would take you 2,000 years to make  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a trillion. If ten of you made a million dollars a day, how long would it take you to make a trillion dollars?
- Ever dream about space travel?
  - You could build 500 personal space shuttles for one trillion dollars. How much would each shuttle cost?
  - It costs \$450 million dollars to launch one space shuttle. For one trillion dollars, how many times could we launch the shuttle?
- Using the handout, practice writing numbers that have at least one trillion in them.
- On the bottom of the handout, use words to write the big numbers you see.
- Statistics questions
  - If 40% of the trillion dollar stimulus package is to be used for tax cuts, how much money would that be?
  - If 30% of the stimulus is to be invested in businesses, how much would that be?

## Just How Much Is a Trillion?

- One trillion is 1,000,000,000,000 -- 10 to the 12th power, or a thousand thousand thousand thousand.
- One trillion dollars would be enough to buy about a thousand boxes of Girl Scout cookies for every person in the United States.
- A trillion barrels of oil would (at current consumption levels) fuel the world for about 33 years.
- The country has not existed for a trillion seconds
- Western civilization has not been around a trillion seconds.
- One trillion seconds ago – 31,688 years – Neanderthals stalked the plains of Europe.
- 1,000 Thousands equals 1 Million (1,000,000); 1,000 Millions equals 1 Billion (1,000,000,000); and 1,000 Billions equals 1 Trillion (1,000,000,000,000)
- A million dollars a day for 2 thousand years is only three quarters of a trillion dollars.
- A million seconds is 11 ½ days, a billion seconds is 32 years. A trillion seconds is 32 thousand years.
- One trillion one dollar bills stacked high would reach nearly 68 thousand miles into space, one third of the way to the moon.
- If you travel around the world at the equator 40 million times, you would travel one trillion miles.
- Roughly 500,000 gallons fall over both sides of Niagara Falls *each second*. One trillion gallons would equal the amount of water that falls in a little over three weeks.

# How Much is A Trillion?

A trillion is a big, big, big number. Let's write it out and see what it looks like (provide students with numbers for each block using the national debt, the stimulus or bailout).

	hundred thousands	ten thousands	thousands	hundreds	tens	ones
trillions	hundred billions	ten billions	billions	hundred millions	ten millions	millions

Now write the final number below.

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Use words to write the following numbers.

8 840 469 248 253

5 472 631 978 147

16 471 902 368 321

41 581 780 695 02

