

The Game of Life
Trade-Offs / Life Choices Project

Updated: 2016-02-10

Life is full of great opportunities. Choosing where you live, what you drive, what type of lifestyle you want to lead, and how you plan for the future are all critical decisions you'll make as you begin your adult life.

Very quickly you'll realize that adult life is full of trade-offs – decisions you make to do certain things that mean you won't be able to afford to do other things.

For this exercise you'll be given a spreadsheet that tracks some of the major costs you'll incur when you're an employed young adult. In this spreadsheet you're earning an annual salary of \$26,000 – *not bad!* The spreadsheet gives you choices on some of the most important lifestyle decisions you'll make, like:

- 1) Rent – where you live (in an apartment or a home, alone or with roommates, or at home with your family).
- 2) Vehicle – what vehicle you drive (including gas and insurance costs).
- 3) Entertainment – how you spend your time outside of work.
- 4) College Tuition – whether or not you decide to continue your education after high school to earn an industry certification, an advanced degree or both.
- 5) Owning a Pet – whether or not you own a pet.
- 6) Retirement Savings – whether or not you start planning for your retirement.

Your mission: select among the choices you're given for each of these six categories, and determine if you're able to save money every month, or if you're running a "monthly deficit" ("deficit" means you're spending more money every month than you're earning).

You can use this spreadsheet to change your choices until you're happy with your trade-offs.

When you're done, save your spreadsheet and answer the following questions.



Written Assignment

- 1) What trade-offs did you make when you developed your personal budget? What expenditures did you *wish* you could make, but you found you just couldn't afford?

- 2) If you ran a deficit because you chose to continue your education, what option do you think you'll have to pay for your education that will enable you to afford that activity on your current salary?

- 3) If you'd like to make different trade-offs that would enable you to spend more money, what options are available to you? How could these trade-offs impact your financial future and happiness?