

Activity Guide: Needs, Rights and Wants

★★ For children and young people who have a good level of comprehension and reflection ability

Suggested Timing	30 – 45 minutes	
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want and Needs Handout#1 Board or chart paper and markers 	
Educator Note	This activity asks students to rank examples from most important to least important, then reflect on which items are wants, needs or rights. Use this activity before a Country Pack to prepare students for rights-based discussion.	
Need	Right	Want
<p>A need is something essential for a child's survival, health, learning and development. When a need is recognized in law or an international agreement, it is connected to a right.</p> <p><i>Examples: nutritious food, clean water, shelter, health care, education, safety, play and supportive relationships</i></p>	<p>Children have rights simply because they are human. Rights are not earned, deserved or given as privileges, and they cannot be taken away as punishment.</p> <p><i>Examples: the right to education, health care, protection from harm, a name and identity, and the chance to share views on issues that affect them</i></p>	<p>A want is something a person may prefer or enjoy, but it is not essential for survival, health, safety or development.</p> <p><i>Examples: the newest phone, brand-name clothing, video streaming subscriptions, decorations or special outings.</i></p>

- 1. Introduce rights, needs and wants.** Explain that children's rights are things every child should have or be able to do in order to survive, be protected, learn, participate and reach their full potential. Clarify that needs are essential for children's well-being, while wants are things people may enjoy but are not required to live, grow or learn.
- 2. Invite students to brainstorm children's rights.** Ask students to name rights they think all children should have. Record their ideas and encourage them to think beyond basic survival needs, including education, safety, identity, play, participation and protection from harm.
- 3. Introduce the Wants and Needs Handout.** In pairs, provide students with the [Want and Needs Handout #1](#) containing 20 items. Ask them to rank the items on a scale from 1 to 20, with 1 being the most important and 20 being the least important. Explain that they should discuss their choices together and be ready to explain their reasoning.

Each of the 20 cards can be classified in one of two categories:

Need	Want
Protected as RIGHTS in the CRC, indicated by the corresponding article number in the chart below	Not protected as rights since they generally are not necessary for a child's survival, growth and development*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decent shelter (article 27) Nutritious food (article 24) Protection from abuse and neglect (article 19) Education (articles 28, 29) Health care (article 24) Fair treatment and non-discrimination (article 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clothes in the latest style A bicycle Holiday trips Your own bedroom A personal computer A television set A smartphone Money to spend as you like

- Clean air (article 24)
- Opportunities to share opinions (article 12)
- Playgrounds and recreation (article 30)
- Clean water (article 24)
- Opportunities to practice your own culture, language and religion (article 31)
- Fast food

**Some items classified as “wants” may be needs in certain circumstances. For example, access to television or a computer may be an important source of information gathering or sharing conducive to the protection of rights to healthy development and protection from violence and abuse.*

- 4. Ask students to review their rankings.** Once pairs have ranked the items, ask them to look at their highest-ranked choices. Which items are basic needs? Which are wants? Which needs do they think should be protected as children’s rights?
- 5. Discuss as a class.** Invite pairs to share which items they ranked as most important and why. Use the discussion to explore:
 - How they decided the difference between wants and needs
 - Why some needs should be protected as rights
 - Whether any items were difficult to rank
 - Whether all children have these rights met equally
 - What adults, schools, communities and governments can do to help ensure children’s rights are respected
- 6. Close with a connection to National Child Day.** Explain that National Child Day is a time to recognize children’s rights and reflect on how those rights are being upheld in Canada and around the world. Ask students to name one right they think more people should know about.

