

This week's issue: DO PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES DESERVE MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SALARIES?



Questions for Classroom Discussion:

- Why do some people think professional athletes make too much money?
- Contrast athletes' salaries with those of other professionals (such as firefighters, the President of the United States, and teachers). Should any of these professionals make more money than athletes?
- What are some reasons why athletes might deserve high salaries?
- Contrast athletes' salaries with government spending on Head Start. Should athletes have to pay higher taxes so that some of their money will help people who need it?
- Is it logical to pay athletes multi-million dollar salaries?

Salaries for well-known professional athletes are among the highest received in the United States. For example, in 2012, LeBron James earned a \$13 million salary and over \$40 million in endorsements as a professional basketball player. Peyton Manning earned a \$32.4 million salary and had \$10 million in endorsements. In **contrast**, the average U.S. firefighter's salary ranges from \$40,000 to \$60,000. Even the President of the United States makes only \$400,000 per year. These professions carry more responsibility or greater risk, but they pay salaries that do not **parallel** those of athletes.

Also, many people think that athletes throw away their money on expensive houses, cars, and other possessions. Meanwhile, organizations that need money to help people are not getting enough. The Head Start program in Massachusetts, for example, receives about \$4.5 million from the federal government each year. This program gives preschoolers free schooling, food, and medical care. With this amount of money, the program can serve only about half of the eligible children in the state. Even a fraction of a single athlete's salary could **guarantee** that thousands of children receive these services.

On the other hand, athletes must work very hard to get into professional leagues. They train all year, and they put a great deal of strain on their bodies. They risk serious injury every time they play. They also create entertainment value for people. Famous athletes help sports teams, television networks, and other professional sports organizations make a lot of money. Fans are willing to pay a lot to see Peyton Manning or LeBron James play. Many people believe that it is **logical** to give athletes a share of the money they help to bring into the sports **industry**.

Do athletes really deserve multi-million dollar salaries? What do you think?

DO PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES DESERVE MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SALARIES?



guarantee | contrast | parallel | industry | logical

USE THE FOCUS WORDS * and alternate parts of speech

guarantee (*verb*) to promise

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Alex Rodriguez of the New York Yankees had a contract **guaranteeing** him \$252 million over ten years.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Does eating right and exercising **guarantee** good health? Explain.

***guarantee** (*noun*) a promise that something will be high quality

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Some vacation companies offer money-back **guarantees** if it rains during the trip.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Should smartphones come with a lifetime **guarantee**? Why or why not?

contrast (*noun*) comparison to show differences

➡ **Sample Sentence:** In **contrast** to famous baseball players, the average U.S. firefighter's salary ranges from \$40,000 to \$60,000.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** In **contrast** to last year, how much homework do you have this year?

***contrast** (*verb*) to be very different from; to compare in order to show the difference

➡ **Sample Sentence:** The bright, blue sky **contrasted** with the dark clouds that were rolling in.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** What is a rule in your family that **contrasts** with your friends' families' rules? Which rule do you prefer?

parallel (*verb*) to match; to equal

➡ **Sample Sentence:** These professions carry more responsibility or greater risk, but they pay salaries that do not **parallel** those of athletes.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Can anything **parallel** the experience of getting out of school for the summer? Give an example.

***parallel** (*noun*) similarity; shared characteristic

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Creation stories from native people around the world contain many **parallels**.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Name some **parallels** between your English class and your math class.

industry (*noun*) a group of businesses that provide similar products or services

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Many people believe that it is right to give athletes a share of the money they help to bring in to the sports **industry**.

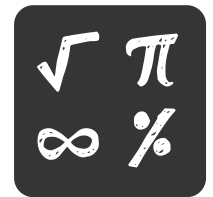
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Which **industry** does more to help the public: the sports **industry** or the music **industry**? Explain.

logical (*adjective*) reasonable; based on clear thinking

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Sharif agreed that it was **logical** to order the food only after all the guests were confirmed.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Is it **logical** to assume that two people that are raised together will have a lot in common? Why or why not?

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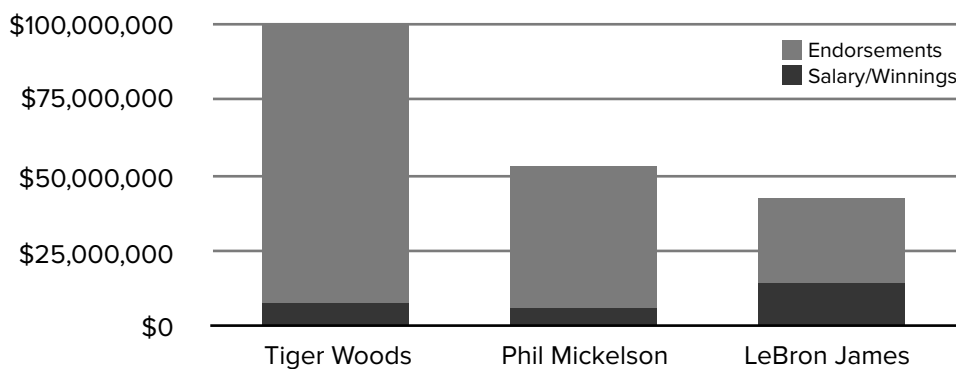


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DO THE MATH

According to *Sports Illustrated*, the highest paid American athletes in 2009 were Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, and LeBron James. These athletes made most of their money promoting products. Companies in many different **industries**, from clothing to banking to oil, pay these superstars huge amounts. These companies believe it is **logical** to pay athletes to promote their products. Nike, for example, believes that paying LeBron James to wear Nike shoes **guarantees** high sales. Another example is that the unparalleled popularity of Tiger Woods **guarantees** that millions of people will know what phone he uses and what car he drives. Of course, when problems in his personal life became public knowledge near the end of 2009, his image suffered. We can therefore expect a big **contrast** between Tiger's endorsement income in 2009 and his endorsement income in 2010.

Highest Paid American Athletes of 2009



Tiger Woods (golf)

Salary/Winnings: \$7,737,626
 Endorsements: \$92,000,000
Total: \$99,737,626

Phil Mickelson (golf)

Salary/Winnings: \$6,350,356
 Endorsements: \$46,600,000
Total: \$52,950,356

LeBron James (basketball)

Salary/Winnings: \$14,410,581
 Endorsements: \$28,000,000
Total: \$42,410,581

Option 1: For which athlete is the **contrast** between salary/winnings and endorsement income the greatest?

- A. Tiger Woods
- B. Phil Mickelson
- C. LeBron James

Option 2: In 2009, Tiger Woods earned \$99,737,626. If we divide this number by 365, we find that he earned \$273,253.77 each day. Write an algebraic expression that shows the difference between Tiger's daily earnings and some other person's. Let s = the other person's yearly salary.

$$273,253.77 - (s/365)$$

Discussion Question: In America, the sports **industry** is huge. It employs millions of people, from coaches to hot dog vendors. While many **industry** employees make very little, celebrity athletes make millions. And while celebrities have endorsed products for many years, today's endorsement contracts are unparalleled. Is it fair that some people get paid so much? In sports like basketball and baseball, players have contracts. Whether they win or lose, their salaries are **guaranteed**. In **contrast**, the players in golf and tennis are paid to win. Which is the more **logical** system? Should LeBron James get paid per win? Why or why not?

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THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

Ms. Kahn’s class is discussing LeBron James’s \$60 million dollar contract.

“Pro basketball is a multi-billion dollar **industry**,” says Rachel. “A big star like LeBron James **guarantees** fans will spend money. It’s **logical** to pay him a big salary.”

“It may be true that team owners have a good reason to pay stars like LeBron James large salaries,” says Shefali, “but it is difficult to judge how much money someone deserves for their work.”

“Do you think we can create a system to **logically** figure out how much a certain profession deserves to be paid?” asks Ms. Kahn. “Then we could **contrast** the sums.”

“Well,” suggests Patrick, “the amount of education someone has often determines the kind of job he or she can get. I wonder if there is a **parallel** between how many years of school are required for a job and how much that job pays? Or maybe if the job is really rare it affects how much the job pays?”

Patrick found this topic very interesting and decided to investigate this question. He looked online to find out how much people in five different professions made per hour, how many years they needed to attend school past high school, and how many people were in each profession.

Patrick wants to find out: Does the amount of education required for a job affect how much the job pays? Does the number of people who have a profession affect how much the job pays?

Procedure:

1. Find out the hourly wages of different professions.
2. Find out how much schooling past high school is needed for each of those professions.
3. Find out the number of people that have that profession.

Profession	Average Hourly Wage	Average Schooling after High School (years)	Number (People with this profession per 1,000,000)
Construction Worker	\$19	2	14,700
Teacher	\$26	5	9,800
Software Developer	\$43	7	4,700
Doctor	\$91	11	2,000
Professional Basketball Player	\$2,476	4	1



For construction workers, teachers, software developers and doctors, what is the relationship between the hourly wage earned and the number of people who have that profession? What about between the hourly wage earned and the amount of schooling required?



We often associate more years of schooling with jobs that get better pay, but there are exceptions, or outliers, like elite athletes. Can you think of any other professions where the amount the job pays doesn’t necessarily match the amount of schooling required?

The hourly wage for these professions is correlated positively with the amount of schooling required, and negatively with the number of people in the profession.

