



Purdue Center for Economic Education

EconVersations: Tariffs, Employment, and the Dollar as a World Currency

Resources for Teaching on Trade and Tariffs

Exploring Trade with Data and Visualizations:

Observatory of Economic Complexity

<https://atlas.media.mit.edu>

This tool from MIT allows you to build a “visual narrative” to illustrate trade relationships among countries around the world. Relative size of rectangles provide the percent of exports or imports represented by a given product or industry, and the color of rectangles represent over 20 different industries. Click on any area to drill down further to find where a given product is imported from (or exported to) for individual countries.

The Globe of Economic Complexity

www.globe.cid.harvard.edu

Translates data on exports onto world maps with dots of various colors representing individual product categories, and dot size representing the relative importance of that product category in a country’s exports. Displays visual links between countries to represent trade relationships for different exports and connects to the Atlas for Economic Complexity (www.atlas.cid.harvard.edu), which is similar to MIT’s Observatory of Economic Complexity.

Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED)

<https://fred.stlouisfed.org>

Incorporates data for the U.S. as well as several other countries (China, India, various European countries) into graphs and charts. Search for any data series (GDP, trade, ratio of

exports to imports for India, for example), click on the data you want to view and chose the option to add that data to a graph. Graphs can be customized and downloaded. A companion site, GeoFRED (<https://geofred.stlouisfed.org>) provides maps that use color gradations to illustrate differences in a variety of domestic and international variables.

U.S. Census Bureau

<https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/index.html>

Provides access to current news related to trade topics as well as monthly data on imports and exports. Try the “Global Market Finder”, which maps out exports across the world for individual products you choose, with emphasis on the top five (by value). Other options include data on methods of transportation and time series data visualizations.

Visual Capitalist

<https://www.visualcapitalist.com>

“Top U.S. Companies by Import and Export Volume” provides an infographic that looks at commodity shipments into and out of the U.S. for the top ten U.S. exporting and importing companies in paper goods, agriculture, food, chemicals, and recyclables industries. Target, IKEA, Home Depot, and Samsung are included in the list of the top importers with WestRock, Koch Industries, and International Paper in the list of top exporters. While the infographic includes only the top 10 importers and exporters, data tables are provided for the top 20.

Incorporating Trade and Tariffs in Lessons:

Econ Lowdown Online Learning (from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis)

www.econlowdown.org

Requires that you set up a password-protected account and allows you to create virtual classrooms where you can add resources. Below is a description of three of the EconLowdown lessons related to trade and trade barriers:

Explore Economics: Episode 4—The Perfect Breakfast

How can a kid in Canada get orange juice for breakfast when oranges don’t grow in Canada, and how can a kid in Florida have maple syrup on his pancakes when it’s not cold enough in Florida for trees to produce maple syrup? This 10-minute animation (more

appropriate for 3rd-6th graders) goes through the process of trading maple syrup for oranges (and oranges for maple syrup).

Also available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzdIX7uJR0g>.

Page One Economics: Does International Trade Create Winners and Losers?

Domestic exporters and foreign consumers benefit from trade, but are those benefits enough to outweigh the costs to companies who can't compete in a global marketplace? Students read about the winners and losers and answer some questions related to the information content. Relevant FRED graphs are also included. For other Page One Economics resources, you can also go to their website directly, <https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/page-one-economics>.

Comparative Advantage of Justice

Superhero “Jack of All Trades” is faster at everything, but does that mean he should do everything? Jack’s archenemy Miss Information seems to think so, but is she right? This 2-hour online activity introduces students the concept of opportunity cost in determining who has comparative advantage in a given task and intersperses videos with “commercial breaks” that assess student understanding along the way. Lessons with Jack can be separated into five individual lessons covering absolute advantage, comparative advantage, production possibilities, specialization, and benefits of trade. You can also experience the sequel, “Currency Crusaders of Justice” where superhero Jack assists his friend Andy who’s on vacation and is confused by exchange rates.

Council for Economic Education EconEdLink

www.econedlink.org

Choose grade ranges and topics of interest including benefits of trade, barriers to trade, and comparative advantage.

Free Trade

<https://www.econedlink.org/resources/free-trade/>

This activity asks students to evaluate 4 questions: 1) What are the arguments for free trade? 2) What are the arguments against free trade? 3) Why did the United States sign on to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)? 4) Did NAFTA achieve its goals? Two resources associated with each question help students build responses to each question. The activity does not include information on NAFTA’s replacement (the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement—USMCA), but resources related to USMCA could be incorporated into the assignment.

The Trading Game: Should LeBron James Mow His Own Lawn? (Classroom activity for Grades 6-8)

<https://www.econedlink.org/resources/should-lebron-james-mow-his-own-lawn/>

Students rank the values they place on different gift cards and trade with others in successively larger and larger groups. After each trade, students rate the gift card values they have until “World Trade” provides the highest total value. Includes suggestions for assessment and extensions.

Comparative Advantage Activity

<https://www.econedlink.org/resources/comparative-advantage-activity/>

This interactive, online activity introduces comparative advantage with Tony and Nino who are making pizzas and salads. The principles of comparative advantage carry over to an international example with cheese and wheat in the U.S. and France. Also available from <http://technology.councilforeconed.org/comparative-advantage/>.

Stossel in the Classroom

https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both_sides

“Both Sides” videos put two opposing viewpoints side-by-side (Stossel’s videos tends to support a libertarian viewpoint). Each video is under five minutes in length, and some also come with teacher guides. Access to teacher guides requires registration. “Both Sides” videos related to trade include “Is Free Trade Good for America?”, “Are the Trump Tariffs Good for America?”, and “Buy American, Hire American?”.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

<https://www.oecd.org/trade>

From OECD’s home page, you can choose the “Trade” option from the “Topics” menu to learn more about the benefits of international trade as well as the challenges of globalization. The sidebar there features a news feed dedicated to trade issues around the world, and you can choose an individual country to see current information available for that country.

Foundation for Teaching Economics (FTE)

<https://www.fte.org/teachers/teacher-resources/lesson-plans/tradelessons/>

FTE provides seven lesson plans related to international trade (with 10 activities and exercises). These cover a variety of topics from the basics of trade with supply and demand to international monetary exchange. Each lesson plan includes a list of content standards that each lesson satisfies as well as a thorough presentation of key points that are covered. Here are two examples:

Tic-Tac-Toe Tariff

<https://www.fte.org/teachers/teacher-resources/lesson-plans/stand-alone-lessons-activities-hot-topics/tic-tac-toe-tariff/>

Students from Country X and Country O trade Dum Dum Pops for flavors they prefer. At first, trading is restricted to a student’s own country, but “international” trades with students from the other country are eventually allowed. However, each trade with someone from another country requires that a tariff be paid in the form of a completed game of tic-tac-toe with their trading partner. Potential strategies to avoid “paying” the tariff are highlighted.

Trade and the Environment

<https://www.fte.org/teachers/teacher-resources/lesson-plans/tradelessons/lesson-5-trade-and-the-environment/>

This lesson explores concerns that globalization damages the environment. The associated “Trash” activity allows students to act as buyers and sellers in a market for trash and is based on the real-life experiences of Seattle, WA and Gilliam County, OR.

EconFilms

www.econfilms.tv

A private film producer, EconFilms has several short videos related to topics in economics that come from a global perspective. For example, “**A Two-Way Street**” is a seven-minute mini-documentary produced for the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER). It investigates why food is often imported into South Africa from other continents—even though neighboring countries in southern Africa could produce and transport food. The direct link to this video is available at <http://www.econfilms.tv/film/two-way-street/>.

Other videos to consider from EconFilms include

- **“Transformation in Tanzania”**
This video summarizes efforts to increase economic growth in Tanzania, including expanding trade in agriculture.
<http://www.econfilms.tv/film/transformation-in-tanzania/>

- **“Dani Rodrik: Globalisation--The Trade-offs”**
Dani is a Harvard economics professor who is originally from Turkey. In this video, he identifies the potential “winners” and “losers” of hyper-globalization.
<http://www.econfilms.tv/film/dani-rodrik-globalisation-trade-offs/>
- **“Football in Pakistan: An Innovation Story”**
Close to 75% of the world’s soccer balls are produced in Pakistan, with 50% produced in the single city of Sialkot, Pakistan. This video follows economists who are working to help Pakistan maintain its comparative advantage in producing soccer balls.
<http://www.econfilms.tv/film/football-in-pakistan-an-innovation-story/> .