FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

The 10 Laws of Finance

A Real-World Education in Money, Business, and Freedom

Devon Coombs, CPA, MBA

About the Author

Devon Coombs grew up in poverty in Southern California. He never knew his father. His mother died when he was fifteen. By eighteen, he was on his own.

He started a recording studio at eighteen in North Hollywood. The 2008 recession forced him to close the business by twenty-one. He spent over a year living in his car, working as a bartender on Sunset Boulevard and a busboy at the Tower Bar to pay off the debt.

When the numbers made it clear that effort alone would never be enough, he enrolled at Pierce College. He discovered accounting, transferred to Cal State Northridge, and graduated magna cum laude from the Accountancy and Business Honors programs. He was hired by Deloitte before finishing his last semester and passed his CPA exams early.

Over the next decade, he built a career across the most complex financial environments in technology — advising on IPOs and M&A at Deloitte and Riveron, then joining Google Cloud as controller for Google Cloud Marketplace and head of the AI Deals Desk. He designed and delivered training programs for over 10,000 finance and operational stakeholders.

He left Google to teach.

The same tools work from homelessness to multi-billion-dollar deals. This book puts them in your hands.

How to Run This Course

The 10 Laws of Finance Course is designed to be simple, flexible, and deeply practical. Each session follows the same rhythm so participants can focus on the content rather than the structure.

Sample Session Flow (~90 minutes)

OPENING QUESTIONS

5–10 min. Warm up with personal reflection questions to set the tone.

TEACHING SUMMARY

10–15 min. Review the core concepts, stories, and frameworks from the chapter.

VIDEO / READING

15–20 min. Watch the session video or discuss the assigned reading.

DISCUSSION

15–30 min. Group conversation using the guided questions in this Guide.

PRACTICE (EXERCISE)

15–20 min. Work through the hands-on exercise individually or in pairs.

REFLECTION & CLOSE

5–10 min. Share takeaways and preview the coming week's practice.

This Course works in small groups, classrooms, book clubs, corporate training, and one-on-one mentoring. Adapt the timing and structure to fit your community.

The Weekly Rhythm

01 LEARN

Gather together for an interactive experience of learning through teaching, storytelling, and group discussion. Bring your Guide and follow along.

IN COMMUNITY

02 PRACTICE

On your own before the next session, work through the exercise — applying the Law to your real financial life using the tools in this Guide.

ON YOUR OWN

03 REFLECT

Set aside 10–15 minutes to reflect on your experience. Reflection questions are included at the end of each session in this Guide.

ON YOUR OWN

04 PROCESS TOGETHER

When you come back together, begin by sharing reflections. This is crucial — we need community to process our decisions and make sense of our stories.

IN COMMUNITY

Before You Begin:
The Financial Health Snapshot

Before you begin Session 01, set aside 15–20 minutes for this self-assessment. It's designed to help you honestly reflect on where you stand financially — not to judge, but to establish a baseline.

You can return to this snapshot at the end of the Course to see how your awareness, habits, and decisions have shifted.

Rate yourself 1–5 on each dimension (1 = not at all, 5 = very strong)

Dimension	Score
I know my exact net worth (assets minus liabilities)	
I track my income and expenses monthly	
I can explain my key financial ratios (savings rate, debt-to-income)	
I have written financial goals with deadlines	
I understand how compounding affects my savings and debt	
I evaluate purchases based on cash flow, not just price	
I quantify risk before making major financial decisions	
My income comes from more than one source or skill	
I consider opportunity cost when making decisions	
My time and money are aligned with my stated values	

Answer slowly and honestly. There are no wrong answers — only starting points.

PART 02

The Ten Sessions

SESSION 01

You Cannot Fix What You Hide

Accounting Fundamentals

Overview

- Progress requires clarity, and clarity requires truth.
- Most people avoid confronting their finances because truth forces accountability.
- Finance and accounting are tools for confronting reality — they give you a measurable way to understand your situation.
- Before you can change anything, you must confront the truth of where you actually are.
- A house built on sand collapses the moment pressure hits. A house built on rock stands. That rock is honesty.

SESSION 01 — YOU CANNOT FIX WHAT YOU HIDE

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. What is your earliest memory of money — earning it, spending it, or seeing it shape a decision?
2. If you had to grade your current financial honesty on a scale of 1–10, what would you give yourself and why?
3. What is one financial truth you've been avoiding?

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Accounting Fundamentals

Key Concepts

- Progress requires clarity, and clarity requires truth.
- Most people avoid confronting their finances because truth forces accountability.
- Finance and accounting are tools for confronting reality — they give you a measurable way to understand your situation.
- Before you can change anything, you must confront the truth of where you actually are.
- A house built on sand collapses the moment pressure hits. A house built on rock stands. That rock is honesty.

SESSION 01 — YOU CANNOT FIX WHAT YOU HIDE

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Why do you think most people avoid looking at their real financial numbers?
2. Devon writes that his consulting client 'wasn't lying to me — he was lying to himself.' Have you seen this pattern in your own life or others'?
3. What is the difference between knowing your numbers and understanding your numbers?
4. How does financial self-deception spread into other areas of life?

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What surprised you most about the stories in this session?
2. What is one thing you plan to do differently this week with your finances?

Practice

Seeing the Truth Clearly

Before you can set meaningful goals or build any plan that will last, you need a foundation rooted in truth. This exercise is meant to be quick. Do not calculate, justify, or open spreadsheets. Simply write down what you already know.

> **1. What is your current financial position?**
> List everything you have, everything you owe, and the difference. This is your net worth. One note on your phone or a few lines on paper is enough.

> **2. What don't you know?**
> Identify the gaps. If there are debts you are unsure about, interest rates you have forgotten, or obligations you have been avoiding — write down the information you need to gather.

> **3. What is your personal income statement?**
> Choose a timeframe: a day, week, or month. Write down how much money came in and how much went out. Note the difference.

> **4. What does the story say when you read it as if it belonged to someone else?**
> Step back from the numbers. Look at them as a stranger's situation. What seems obvious? What patterns show up?

SESSION 01 — YOU CANNOT FIX WHAT YOU HIDE

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 1: You Cannot Fix What You Hide (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 02

Displaying Wealth Consumes It

Financial Statement Analysis

SESSION 02 — DISPLAYING WEALTH CONSUMES IT

Overview

- What looks successful is often financially fragile.
- Learn to separate appearance from strength using financial statements.
- The recording studio looked like success but bled cash; the tutoring business looked small but quietly compounded.
- Your personal balance sheet and income statement reveal whether your life is building equity or consuming it.
- Control — not display — is the foundation of real financial strength.

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. Think of someone whose financial life looks impressive from the outside. What do you actually know about their financial health?
2. Have you ever spent money to maintain an image rather than build real stability?
3. What does 'financial strength' mean to you — and has that definition changed over time?

SESSION 02 — DISPLAYING WEALTH CONSUMES IT

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Financial Statement Analysis

Key Concepts

- What looks successful is often financially fragile.
- Learn to separate appearance from strength using financial statements.
- The recording studio looked like success but bled cash; the tutoring business looked small but quietly compounded.
- Your personal balance sheet and income statement reveal whether your life is building equity or consuming it.
- Control — not display — is the foundation of real financial strength.

SESSION 02 — DISPLAYING WEALTH CONSUMES IT

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Devon compares a recording studio (high display, low return) to a tutoring business (low display, high return). What are the equivalents in your own life?
2. What is the difference between 'looking rich' and 'being financially strong'?
3. How do balance sheets and income statements help you see through the display?
4. Devon's VP friend drove a modest car despite earning a high salary. Why is this mindset so rare?

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What is one area where you might be prioritizing display over control?
2. If you applied Return on Assets (ROA) thinking to your own purchases, what would change?

SESSION 02 — DISPLAYING WEALTH CONSUMES IT

Practice

Reading the Truth in Your Numbers

Review your personal balance sheet and income statement from Session 1. Write down what you see. Do not calculate, justify, or optimize yet. This first pass is about seeing the truth as it exists today.

> **1. What story am I projecting?**
> What do I want the outside world to believe about my life, my progress, and my success?

> **2. What story do the numbers actually tell?**
> Look at your finances without excuses, explanations, or optimism. What is objectively true?

> **3. Where is the gap?**
> Identify the distance between perception and reality. Which categories, decisions, or constraints create the biggest drag on your trajectory?

> **4. Where is the leverage?**
> If you could change only one or two things, which would have the largest impact on aligning your finances with your stated intentions?

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 2: Displaying Wealth Consumes It (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 03

A Number Alone Will Lie to You

Ratio Analysis

Overview

- A metric without context becomes a story you tell yourself.
- Learn to interpret any number through the right lenses: time, benchmarks, alternatives, and trade-offs.
- Trend analysis reveals where you're heading. Ratio analysis reveals how efficiently you're getting there.
- Benchmarking against peers puts your numbers in perspective — but always compare to yourself first.
- Context transforms raw data into actionable intelligence.

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. Have you ever felt great about a number (salary, savings, grade) only to realize it didn't mean what you thought?
2. What is one financial metric you track — and how do you know if it's 'good'?
3. When was the last time context completely changed your interpretation of a situation?

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Ratio Analysis

Key Concepts

- A metric without context becomes a story you tell yourself.
- Learn to interpret any number through the right lenses: time, benchmarks, alternatives, and trade-offs.
- Trend analysis reveals where you're heading. Ratio analysis reveals how efficiently you're getting there.
- Benchmarking against peers puts your numbers in perspective — but always compare to yourself first.
- Context transforms raw data into actionable intelligence.

SESSION 03 — A NUMBER ALONE WILL LIE TO YOU

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

SESSION 03 — A NUMBER ALONE WILL LIE TO YOU

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Devon describes 'Mom & Pop' vs. 'Fancy Restaurant' — both profitable, totally different financial health. What surprised you about the comparison?
2. Why is comparing to yourself over time more important than comparing to others?
3. What financial ratios would be most useful for understanding your personal financial health?
4. How could you apply trend analysis to your own income and expenses over the past 6–12 months?

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What is one number in your financial life that you've been looking at without context?
2. How would you go about finding the right benchmark for your situation?

Practice

Putting Numbers in Context

Take the financial data you've been building and add context. You'll analyze your own numbers using the same tools professionals use to evaluate companies.

1. Run a trend analysis on your income and expenses

Look at your finances across 3–6 months. What is going up? What is going down? What patterns emerge?

2. Calculate your key personal ratios

Savings rate, debt-to-income, expense-to-income. How do they compare to where you want to be?

3. Benchmark against your own past

Compare your current financial position to where you were 1, 3, or 5 years ago. What has improved? What has drifted?

4. Identify one metric that needs a new lens

Pick one number you've been tracking and ask: what context am I missing that would change my interpretation?

SESSION 03 — A NUMBER ALONE WILL LIE TO YOU

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 3: A Number Alone Will Lie to You (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 04

Accuracy Emerges From Error

Forecasting (FP&A)

SESSION 04 — ACCURACY EMERGES FROM ERROR

Overview

- Forecasting is not a talent; it is a feedback loop.
- The MARCS framework: Measurable goals, Assumptions stated, Results tracked, Corrections applied, Sequencing honored.
- You get less wrong on purpose by forecasting, tracking, comparing, and correcting.
- Cognitive errors — anchoring, optimism bias, time horizon distortion — distort how you see the future.
- Correction creates accuracy, and accuracy compounds into outcomes that look like magic.

SESSION 04 — ACCURACY EMERGES FROM ERROR

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. Have you ever set a financial goal that you completely missed? What happened?
2. Do you have a system for tracking your goals, or do you mostly go by feel?
3. What is one prediction you made about your life 5 years ago — and how close were you?

SESSION 04 — ACCURACY EMERGES FROM ERROR

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Forecasting (FP&A)

Key Concepts

- Forecasting is not a talent; it is a feedback loop.
- The MARCS framework: Measurable goals, Assumptions stated, Results tracked, Corrections applied, Sequencing honored.
- You get less wrong on purpose by forecasting, tracking, comparing, and correcting.
- Cognitive errors — anchoring, optimism bias, time horizon distortion — distort how you see the future.
- Correction creates accuracy, and accuracy compounds into outcomes that look like magic.

SESSION 04 — ACCURACY EMERGES FROM ERROR

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

SESSION 04 — ACCURACY EMERGES FROM ERROR

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Why does Devon argue that being wrong is actually a feature, not a bug, of good planning?
2. Which of the cognitive errors (anchoring, optimism bias, time horizon distortion, solution mismatch) do you think affects you most?
3. How would a Forecast vs. Actual (FvA) analysis change the way you set New Year's resolutions?
4. What is the difference between a goal and a forecast?

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What is one area of your life where a simple forecast would help you make better decisions?
2. How comfortable are you with being wrong as a step toward being right?

Practice

Building a MARCS Forecast

Choose one domain: finances, career, health, relationships, or time. Build a simple forecast using the MARCS framework.

1. Measurable: Define your target

Write a specific, numerical goal with a deadline. Not 'save more money' but 'save $10,000 by December.'

2. Assumptions: State what must be true

List the assumptions behind your forecast. What income level? What expenses? What market conditions?

3. Results: Track actuals monthly

Create a simple table to record what actually happens each month versus what you predicted.

4. Corrections: Identify the variance

When actual differs from forecast, ask why. Adjust your model, not your ego.

5. Sequencing: Order your goals

Which goals must happen first to enable others? Build your timeline with dependencies in mind.

SESSION 04 — ACCURACY EMERGES FROM ERROR

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 4: Accuracy Emerges From Error (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 05

Present Decisions Create Exponential Future Impact

Time Value of Money

Overview

- Compounding systems punish early mistakes and reward early alignment.
- Small, 'reasonable' decisions today create massive downstream outcomes.
- Time value of money: a dollar today is worth more than a dollar tomorrow.
- Jordan vs. Maya illustrates how starting early with small amounts beats starting late with large ones.
- The hardest part is staying disciplined when progress feels flat and the payoff looks distant.

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. What is one small decision you made years ago that turned out to have a much bigger impact than expected?
2. Do you find it easy or hard to delay gratification for a future payoff? Why?
3. If someone gave you $10,000 today or $15,000 in five years, which would you choose — and why?

SESSION 05 — PRESENT DECISIONS CREATE EXPONENTIAL FUTURE IMPACT

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Time Value of Money

Key Concepts

- Compounding systems punish early mistakes and reward early alignment.
- Small, 'reasonable' decisions today create massive downstream outcomes.
- Time value of money: a dollar today is worth more than a dollar tomorrow.
- Jordan vs. Maya illustrates how starting early with small amounts beats starting late with large ones.
- The hardest part is staying disciplined when progress feels flat and the payoff looks distant.

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Why does the 'Jordan vs. Maya' example surprise most people when they see the numbers?
2. Devon writes that 'progress feels flat' for years before compounding kicks in. How do you stay motivated during the flat part?
3. What financial decisions are you making today that will compound — for better or worse — over the next 10 years?
4. How does understanding future value and present value change the way you think about debt?

SESSION 05 — PRESENT DECISIONS CREATE EXPONENTIAL FUTURE IMPACT

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

SESSION 05 — PRESENT DECISIONS CREATE EXPONENTIAL FUTURE IMPACT

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What is one area where starting today — even small — would create the biggest compounding benefit?
2. How would you explain compounding to someone who has never invested?

Practice

Making Time Visible

This exercise helps you see the invisible power of time on your financial decisions. You'll work through the math that most people never run.

1. Define the Destination (Income First)

What annual income do you need in retirement or financial independence? Work backward from lifestyle, not forward from savings.

2. Calculate Your Compounding Runway

How many years until your target date? What is your current invested balance? What can you contribute monthly?

3. Run Three Scenarios

Model three futures: (1) you start now, (2) you start in 5 years, (3) you start in 10 years. See the gap that delay creates.

4. Identify Your Compounding Killers

What current spending, debt, or decisions are stealing years from your compounding runway? Name them.

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 5: Present Decisions Create Exponential Future Impact (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 06

Potential Is a Story; Cash Flow Is Reality

Valuation

Overview

- A comforting narrative can be financially lethal.
- The Three Valuation Lenses: Cost approach (floor), Market approach (ceiling), Value approach (true worth via DCF).
- Cash flow — not potential, not promises, not projections — determines what something is actually worth.
- The materiality threshold helps you decide when it's worth running the numbers and when it's not.
- Apply valuation thinking to major life decisions: rent vs. buy, career moves, business opportunities.

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. Have you ever bought something — a home, car, degree, business — where the 'story' turned out differently than the cash flow reality?
2. When you hear that something is 'a great investment,' what evidence do you look for?
3. What is the biggest financial decision you're currently facing?

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Valuation

Key Concepts

- A comforting narrative can be financially lethal.
- The Three Valuation Lenses: Cost approach (floor), Market approach (ceiling), Value approach (true worth via DCF).
- Cash flow — not potential, not promises, not projections — determines what something is actually worth.
- The materiality threshold helps you decide when it's worth running the numbers and when it's not.
- Apply valuation thinking to major life decisions: rent vs. buy, career moves, business opportunities.

SESSION 06 — POTENTIAL IS A STORY; CASH FLOW IS REALITY

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

SESSION 06 — POTENTIAL IS A STORY; CASH FLOW IS REALITY

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Devon's boba shop example shows how three valuation approaches give three very different answers. Why does this matter for personal decisions?
2. How does the rent vs. buy analysis challenge conventional wisdom about homeownership?
3. What is the difference between potential and proven cash flow — and why do people consistently overpay for potential?
4. How would you apply the materiality threshold to everyday spending decisions?

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What is one 'story' in your financial life that deserves a cash flow reality check?
2. Which valuation lens do you naturally gravitate toward, and which one do you ignore?

Practice

Applying the Value Lens

Take a major financial decision you're facing (or have recently made) and run it through the valuation framework from this chapter.

1. Which valuation lens are you using?
Are you anchored to cost (what you paid), market (what others pay), or value (what the cash flows prove)? Name it.

2. What does the cash flow actually say?
Ignore the narrative. Map out the real cash inflows and outflows over time. What does the math show?

3. Are you treating a cost as an investment?
Some costs masquerade as investments. Is this purchase actually generating returns, or just generating comfort?

4. What is the materiality threshold?
Is this decision large enough to justify careful analysis, or is it below your threshold?

5. Have you identified the real pain point?
Are you choosing this goal to solve the correct problem, or is this exercise revealing a better problem to aim at?

6. Have you considered qualitative impacts?
What non-financial factors — time, stress, relationships, identity — should influence this decision?

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 6: Potential Is a Story; Cash Flow Is Reality (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 07

The Only Worthwhile Risks Command Incremental Expected Rewards

Overview

- Risk is only rational when the upside is incremental, the downside is survivable, and the return beats your best alternative.
- Expected value: multiply each outcome by its probability to find the true mathematical payoff.
- Your personal discount rate and hurdle rate determine which risks are worth taking.
- The key question is not 'Could this work?' but 'Does the expected payoff justify what I'm risking?'
- Great investors and great companies price risk with discipline — you can do the same.

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. What is the biggest risk you've ever taken — financial or otherwise? How did it turn out?
2. Do you consider yourself risk-averse, risk-neutral, or risk-seeking? Has that changed over time?
3. When was the last time you quantified a risk before taking it?

SESSION 07 — THE ONLY WORTHWHILE RISKS COMMAND INCREMENTAL EXPECTED REWARDS

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Risk & Reward

Key Concepts

- Risk is only rational when the upside is incremental, the downside is survivable, and the return beats your best alternative.
- Expected value: multiply each outcome by its probability to find the true mathematical payoff.
- Your personal discount rate and hurdle rate determine which risks are worth taking.
- The key question is not 'Could this work?' but 'Does the expected payoff justify what I'm risking?'
- Great investors and great companies price risk with discipline — you can do the same.

SESSION 07 — THE ONLY WORTHWHILE RISKS COMMAND INCREMENTAL EXPECTED REWARDS

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Devon's 'pool jump' example illustrates expected value in a visceral way. How does thinking in probabilities change the way you evaluate decisions?
2. Why do people consistently take risks where the downside is catastrophic, even when the upside is modest?
3. How would you calculate the expected value of a career change or a new business venture?
4. What is your personal 'hurdle rate' — the minimum return that makes a risk worth taking for you?

SESSION 07 — THE ONLY WORTHWHILE RISKS COMMAND INCREMENTAL EXPECTED REWARDS

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What risk are you currently considering that deserves an expected value calculation?
2. How would your decision-making change if you evaluated every major choice through the risk/reward lens?

Practice

Risk Evaluation Framework

Use this framework to evaluate jobs, investments, relationships, and business ideas. Run a real decision through each step.

1. Identify the decision and list all possible outcomes

Write down every realistic outcome — best case, worst case, and most likely — with estimated probabilities.

2. Calculate the expected value

Multiply each outcome's value by its probability. Sum them. This is the mathematical reality of the bet.

3. Assess survivability

If the worst case happens, can you recover? If not, the expected value doesn't matter — the risk is too large.

4. Compare to your best alternative

What else could you do with the same time, money, or energy? Does this option beat the next best use?

5. Check for emotional distortion

Are you being pulled by excitement, fear, or social pressure? Separate the math from the feeling.

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 7: The Only Worthwhile Risks Command Incremental Expected Rewards (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 08

Concentration Creates Unnecessary Fragility

Diversification Theory & Portfolio Management

Overview

- One plan, one bet, one income stream — that is how you lose everything to a single bad break.
- Diversify across your career, your finances, and your life.
- Devon's bartending story: half his income disappeared with a dry-erase marker. Structure beats effort.
- Specialization creates value, but over-specialization creates fragility.
- The goal isn't to eliminate risk — it's to build a life where no single failure can take everything.

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. How many sources of income do you currently have? If your primary one disappeared tomorrow, what would you do?
2. In what area of your life are you most concentrated — and most vulnerable?
3. Have you ever experienced a sudden loss that a more diversified structure would have prevented?

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Diversification Theory & Portfolio Management

Key Concepts

- One plan, one bet, one income stream — that is how you lose everything to a single bad break.
- Diversify across your career, your finances, and your life.
- Devon's bartending story: half his income disappeared with a dry-erase marker. Structure beats effort.
- Specialization creates value, but over-specialization creates fragility.
- The goal isn't to eliminate risk — it's to build a life where no single failure can take everything.

SESSION 08 — CONCENTRATION CREATES UNNECESSARY FRAGILITY

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Devon compares someone earning 2×$30K to someone earning 1×$60K. Why is the risk profile so different despite identical income?
2. How does the CS/software engineering job market story illustrate the danger of over-specialization?
3. What does diversification look like beyond just investments — in skills, relationships, and identity?
4. Where is the line between 'focused' and 'fragile'?

SESSION 08 — CONCENTRATION CREATES UNNECESSARY FRAGILITY

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What is one concrete step you could take in the next 90 days to reduce your concentration risk?
2. If you lost your primary income source tomorrow, how long could you sustain your current lifestyle?

Practice

The Fragility Audit

Assess your current concentration risk across income, skills, relationships, and structure. Then build a 90-day diversification plan.

1. Part One: Map your concentration

For each category (income, skills, relationships, network), identify: How many sources? How dependent are you on the largest one?

2. Stress test your structure

Would one health issue, one market crash, or one layoff put you in crisis? Be honest.

3. Part Two: Build your diversification plan

Income & Skills: Add one small income stream or learn one transferable skill. Relationships: Cultivate connections in at least three separate circles.

4. The 30-Day Stress Test Question

If the single biggest thing you're relying on disappeared tomorrow, what would you do in the first 30 days? If you don't have a clear answer, start building your second layer now.

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 8: Concentration Creates Unnecessary Fragility (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 09

Every "Yes" Has a Casualty

Opportunity Cost & Capital Budgeting

Overview

- Every decision has a cost you cannot see until you learn to look for it.
- Set a personal hurdle rate — the minimum return your decisions must beat to make sense.
- Devon's COVID mortgage payoff story: knowledge isn't protection — only a system is.
- Your emotions will always arrive before your logic. Build a system that's ready for them.
- Compare to alternatives, not to nothing. The question is always: 'Compared to what?'

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. What is one 'yes' in your life that you later realized had a hidden cost?
2. When you make a major decision, do you typically compare it to alternatives — or just evaluate it on its own?
3. What does 'opportunity cost' mean to you in practical terms?

SESSION 09 — EVERY "YES" HAS A CASUALTY

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Opportunity Cost & Capital Budgeting

Key Concepts

- Every decision has a cost you cannot see until you learn to look for it.
- Set a personal hurdle rate — the minimum return your decisions must beat to make sense.
- Devon's COVID mortgage payoff story: knowledge isn't protection — only a system is.
- Your emotions will always arrive before your logic. Build a system that's ready for them.
- Compare to alternatives, not to nothing. The question is always: 'Compared to what?'

SESSION 09 — EVERY "YES" HAS A CASUALTY

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

SESSION 09 — EVERY "YES" HAS A CASUALTY

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Devon made what seemed like the safest decision (paying off a 2.8% mortgage) and it turned out to be one of his worst. Why?
2. How does a personal hurdle rate protect you from bad decisions disguised as responsible ones?
3. What is the opportunity cost of your current job, relationship, or living situation?
4. Why do our emotions consistently beat our logic to the decision — and what can we do about it?

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What major decision are you currently facing that deserves an opportunity cost analysis?
2. What would your personal hurdle rate be, and how would it change your current choices?

Practice

Making Decisions You Won't Regret

Use this five-step decision framework for any significant financial, career, or life decision you're facing.

1. Define Your Personal Hurdle Rate

Set the minimum return your life now requires. Early career: ~10%. Mid-career: 15–20%. Limited bandwidth: even higher.

2. Identify the True Alternatives

What must you give up? What could you do instead with the same time, money, or energy? Compare to alternatives, not to nothing.

3. Calculate the Proportional Return

A $20K raise means everything to someone earning $20K, very little to someone earning $200K. Evaluate proportionally.

4. Add the Friction Cost

Time, stress, switching costs, relationship strain, learning curve. If return doesn't clear your hurdle after friction, the answer is no.

5. Decide Against the Best Alternative

Does this option beat what you could earn, build, or become by doing the next best thing? If yes, proceed. If not, decline without regret.

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 9: Every "Yes" Has a Casualty (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

SESSION 10

Success Hardens Into Constraints

Biases & Behavioral Decision-Making

Overview

- The habits, identity, and systems that built your success will eventually become the things that limit it.
- Cognitive biases narrow your vision precisely when stakes are highest.
- The Time Value Index (TVI) quantifies the trade-off between time and money.
- Devon's umbilical cord story: success becomes captivity when you stop questioning the structure.
- The final question isn't 'How much do I earn?' but 'Who am I becoming while I chase the next number?'

Opening Questions

Before we begin, process your thoughts together as a community.

1. Has something that once helped you succeed ever started holding you back? What was it?
2. If you could 'buy back' 10 hours a week, what would you do with them — and what would it cost?
3. What does 'enough' look like for you?

SESSION 10 — SUCCESS HARDENS INTO CONSTRAINTS

Teaching Summary

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Biases & Behavioral Decision-Making

Key Concepts

- The habits, identity, and systems that built your success will eventually become the things that limit it.
- Cognitive biases narrow your vision precisely when stakes are highest.
- The Time Value Index (TVI) quantifies the trade-off between time and money.
- Devon's umbilical cord story: success becomes captivity when you stop questioning the structure.
- The final question isn't 'How much do I earn?' but 'Who am I becoming while I chase the next number?'

SESSION 10 — SUCCESS HARDENS INTO CONSTRAINTS

Teaching Notes

Use this page to take notes during the session.

SESSION 10 — SUCCESS HARDENS INTO CONSTRAINTS

Discussion Questions

Take some time to process together as a community.

1. Devon received a work call 63 minutes after cutting his daughter's umbilical cord. What does that story reveal about how success can harden into constraints?
2. How does the Time Value Index (TVI) help you make decisions that typical financial analysis misses?
3. Which cognitive biases (loss aversion, sunk cost, status quo bias, identity attachment) do you see most in your own decision-making?
4. What would you need to change to align your time with your stated values?

Practice Notes

Use this page to take notes as you work through the practice exercise.

After the Video

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are additional questions for reflection:

1. What is one constraint in your life that used to be an achievement?
2. If you calculated your TVI today, what do you think the score would reveal?

Practice

ROADMAP: Avoiding Cognitive Bias in High-Stakes Decisions

This exercise interrupts default reactions driven by fear, habit, or narrow metrics. Run the sequence slowly. The objective is to re-anchor judgment in reality rather than perception.

1. R — Resource

What would actually break if this went poorly? What financial, relational, health, or reputational resources reduce your real downside?

2. O — Optionality

How much time or flexibility do you have before this decision becomes irreversible? Are you acting as if your options are narrower than they truly are?

3. A — Actual Reality

What would happen if you did nothing? What season of life are you in right now? If nothing changed for five years, would this decision still make sense?

4. D — Dependencies

What must be true for this to work? What information would change your mind?

5. M — Magnitude of Irreversibility

Is this reversible, partially reversible, or permanent? How can you reduce the cost of being wrong?

6. A — Action as Experiment

What is one small, deliberate experiment you can run in the next 30 days?

7. P — Post-Decision Review

What did you learn that you could not have known in advance?

This Session's Reading

For this session, read **Law 10: Success Hardens Into Constraints (pp. TBD)** in *The 10 Laws of Finance* by Devon Coombs.

Practice Reflection

Before your next session, take 10–15 minutes to journal your answers to these questions:

1. What was the most important insight from this session?
2. What did you discover about yourself through the exercise?
3. What is one thing you will do differently this week?

PART 03

Continuing the Journey

Three Timeless Questions

Throughout this course, we returned to three deceptively simple questions. They are not something you "finish" — they are a loop you will come back to at every inflection point of your life.

> **Where are you?**
> Know your real numbers. Know your real situation. No fog, no fiction.

> **Where are you trying to go?**
> Define what "enough" looks like — in dollars and in days.

> **What is the next concrete step?**
> Not the whole plan. Just the next move that bridges where you are to where you want to be.

The Two Ledgers

If you strip this entire course down to its studs, you are left with two ledgers.

The first ledger is the one you've been taught to respect: assets, liabilities, equity, income, expenses, profit, runway, risk, return.

The second ledger is quieter. The times you made the right hard decisions. The conversations where you told the truth. The dinners you were fully present for. The mornings you chose a walk with a friend over one more hour of work.

This course has been an attempt to put those two ledgers on the same page.

The Ledger Check

Before you close this guide, take one quiet moment and run the only ledger check that really matters.

Are you clear on where you are?

Are you honest about where you want to go?

Are you willing to take the next concrete step toward a life where your money and your values are finally on the same team?

If the answer is yes, then you already have everything you need. The rest is just practice.

Recommended Reading

To go deeper on the ideas in this course, consider these resources:

The Psychology of Money — Morgan Housel

Behavioral finance and the human side of money decisions.

I Will Teach You to Be Rich — Ramit Sethi

Practical, systems-based personal finance. Pairs well with the early Laws.

The Compound Effect — Darren Hardy

Small, consistent choices compounding into massive results. Reinforces Law 5.

Atomic Habits — James Clear

Building systems instead of setting goals. Complements the MARCS framework in Law 4.

12 Rules for Life — Jordan Peterson

Personal responsibility and confronting truth before seeking comfort. Mirrors Law 1.

Valuation — McKinsey & Company

How professionals value businesses and assets. Your next step after Law 6.

Decide — Chip Heath & Dan Heath

Pre-deciding choices before pressure arrives. Complements Laws 9 and 10.

Ways to Stay Connected

Website: devoncoombs.com

YouTube: youtube.com/@ambitionaligned

Substack: devoncoombs.substack.com