

# Smart Choice!



## Q: Why are pennies brown?

- Jenny, Grade 4, Oshkosh

**A:** Pennies get their brown color from the materials that they are made from. These materials are copper and zinc. Throughout the years, the amount of copper and zinc in the penny has changed significantly. Some pennies used to be made from only copper and some pennies used to be made from only zinc. The only way to tell them apart back then was to weigh them. Copper pennies weigh 3.11 grams, but zinc pennies weigh only 2.5 grams. Today's pennies are made from both of these materials. They contain 99.2 % zinc and 0.8% copper. Can you guess how long a penny will last for? The average penny lasts for 25 years! That is a lot longer than the dollar bill lasts. Here's a challenge for you; take a look at a penny and see if you can tell a difference in the position of the face compared to the portraits on the other coins.



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Local students connect with local Choice Bank staff through the Smart Choice! program. This program is designed to raise students' awareness of the importance of sound money management. NIE is the non-profit arm of Oshkosh Northwestern that provides local, Oshkosh classrooms with newspapers, educational materials and activities.