

5 No-brainer Money-Saving Tips Everyone Forgets

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Everyone likes saving money -- and there are always ways to cut corners.

No one wants to waste money. Therefore, everyone likes to save money, right? Not necessarily. The problem is, saving money is hard work. There are so many small ways to save money that it's easy to overlook some of them -- and even the most vigilant budgeteers lapse on some of them from time to time. The bright side, of course, is that with so many opportunities for saving money, there are bound to be a few you've overlooked.

If you're trying to trim your monthly budget, this article will help by taking a look at some common ways to save money that are often forgotten. We'll figure out the best ways to save the most money with each method and find out exactly how much money you can save with each one.

5: Turn Down the Heat

The recommended winter setting for a home thermostat when people are at home is 68 degrees Fahrenheit (20 degrees Celsius). If you keep yours above that, reduce it to 68. Once you've gotten used to that daytime temperature (or if you already had it set there), try setting it a few degrees lower. You'll have to experiment to see how low you can stand it -- you don't want to blow the money you saved on heat buying mittens. The exact amount you'll save varies based on heating prices, the size and efficiency of your house and the temperature outside. A rough estimate: 1 to 3 percent savings per degree of thermostat setback.

To save even more, crank the temperature down to 60 or 55 degrees Fahrenheit (15.6 or 12.8 degrees Celsius) when you're away or in bed. (Some people even go down to 50, or 10 degrees Celsius.) If you work outside the home during the day and sleep eight hours a night, you'll be reducing your energy usage for 16 hours per day. If you turn the heat down from 68 degrees to 55 degrees, you'll save 26 percent on your heating bill. That will translate to hundreds of dollars in savings in just a year or two. If you're home during the day and need the heat, you'll save about half as much by just turning it down at night, which is still a nice savings.

By the way, it's a common myth that you'll use so much energy getting the house warm again that you won't save anything by turning it down. When you turn the heat down, the heat doesn't run as the house's temperature falls. You save enough energy then to counteract the energy used to reheat the house, so you break even. The savings come during the time you leave the temperature down, since the heating system isn't working as hard to maintain a differential

between the inside and outside temperatures. The longer you leave the thermostat turned down, the more you'll save.

4: Buy Clothing on Sale

Saving money on clothing is easier than you'd think.

Spending on clothes can be hard to track because it's not something most people do every week or even every month. First, don't focus on brand names. You're usually just paying for the name, and the clothes aren't always nicer than what you'd find in a lesser-known brand. Considering the insane prices for designer jeans, shoes and other apparel, you can rack up massive savings with this step alone, depending on your prior shopping habits.

Next, sort your clothes and note what you wear regularly and what hangs in the closet until you forget you even own it. It doesn't matter how little you spend on an article of clothing -- if you never wear it, it's all wasted money. Focus on versatile pieces that can be worn in different situations or that match lots of other things so you can create different outfits.

Now, plan ahead. You don't want to be buying winter clothes in November because things are most expensive "in season." Stores cycle through their clothes pretty quickly, though, so head to the clearance rack if you have to buy. You'll find incredible deals on clothes that will be in season in a few months. It takes some digging, since those clearance racks can be poorly organized, but it's worth it. Imagine a \$50 pair of jeans on clearance for 75 percent off (not an uncommon sale). They'd cost you less than \$15.

If you're focused on fashion, you can still save money while shopping for current styles. Take a look at fashion outlet stores and discount Web sites. Also consider store brands that follow fashion trends without the prices of big name brands.

3: Buy Non-Perishable Items in Bulk

Many goods are cheaper when purchased in large quantities. Obviously, you want to stay away from things that will spoil (In other words, don't buy milk in bulk). Some bulk purchases go wrong for reasons you couldn't possibly predict: That pack of 500 blank DVDs seemed like a good idea at the time -- until they started collecting dust when everyone switched to flash drives. Win some, lose some.

How can you make sure you win more than you lose? Make an organized space in your house to store your bulk goods. Sturdy basement shelves work well, as long as things stay dry. It can be difficult if you live in a small apartment or a house without a storage area. You might have to repurpose a closet or even buy (or build) a free-standing cabinet.

The best items to buy in bulk are paper goods. Toilet paper, paper towels and printer paper never go bad and store easily. It's also sensible to stock up on cleaning supplies, garbage bags, soap, shampoo, and laundry detergent. These are things you'll always need and will certainly use -- and won't go bad.

Bulk purchases can account for a wide range of savings, depending on the products. Buying large packs at the grocery store can save you five to 10 percent. You can buy even larger quantities at club stores like Sam's Club or BJ's, but the cost of the membership eats into your savings. Don't forget that you'll save some money and time by making fewer trips to the store, too.

2: Skip Starbucks

You'd be shocked at how much money this little contraption can save you.

Coffee is a product with a large gap between the price at a coffee shop and the per cup price if you make it at home. The least expensive coffees at Starbucks or other coffee chains will cost about \$2 for 16 ounces (473 ml). And if you move away from a basic cup of coffee, prices head into the \$4 range and higher.

If you buy a moderately priced package of coffee (\$10 to \$15 for a 12-ounce, or 453 gram, bag) and brew it yourself, it will cost you between 75 cents to \$1.50 per 16 ounce cup, depending on how strong you make your coffee]. If you happen to enjoy even cheaper varieties of coffee, you can get that price down even lower. If you usually buy a coffee at Starbucks every day, it won't take long for the coffee maker to pay for itself, and the savings will start piling up after that.

As an added benefit, you can make your coffee just how you like it, try different varieties of coffee, and never have to deal with the hassle of trying to order coffee in a coffee shop ever again.

1: Ride a Bike

If you can rely on a bicycle for most of your day to day traveling, you'll save money in all sorts of unexpected ways. Most obvious: the gas you'd have needed to drive to work or to the store. If your daily driving uses up 10 gallons (38 liters) of gas each week, you'll save \$30 to \$40 every week by riding your bike. You can cut out the costs of car insurance and car repairs, not to mention the price of a car itself, if you can rely solely on your bicycle for transport. That's a difficult step to imagine, but you'd save thousands of dollars each year.

Public transportation is another alternative mode of travel, but riding a bike has advantages over that, too. A monthly bus pass costs between \$30 and \$105, depending on the city. Wouldn't it be nice to cut that expense out of the budget?

There's one more potential savings factor if you ride your bike everywhere. You might be able to skip the gym membership, since you'll be getting plenty of exercise just getting around town.

Source:

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