

Tips for successful budgeting:



Whether you are suddenly faced with a new financial challenge, or simply trying to save money, these tips can help you achieve your goals.

Begin by creating a realistic budget plan:

- Know what bills are due and when.
- A checking account will provide an easy way to pay bills and a way to help you keep track of what you spend.
- Ask the electric and gas companies if you can get on their budget plan or average payment plan.
- Know how you spend your money. Get in the habit of keeping receipts. Categorize your expenses and look for ways you can economize.
- Plan for large, periodic expenses. Make a budget calendar showing the approximate amount of these expenses and when they're due.
- Budget for regular maintenance and unexpected repairs.
- Adhere to a regular savings plan. Many financial advisors suggest saving 5% of your take-home pay.
- Always keep an emergency fund on hand.
- Plan ahead for major purchases rather than making impulsive decisions.

Tricks to build your savings:

- Save coins from your daily change. Put the coins in a piggy bank. You won't miss them and you'll be surprised how quickly they add up.
- After you've paid the last installment on your car or other loan, regularly add the same amount you've been paying to your savings.
- If you get an income tax refund, deposit it in your savings.

- Save your overtime pay instead of spending it.
- When you get a raise, save it.
- Put gifts of money received for birthdays, the holidays, or other special occasions in savings.
- Be sure all of your money is working for you. Deposit extra sums of cash immediately.
- Adopt a short-term "austerity" program during which you save as much as possible. Buy nothing unless you really need it. Cut out movies, eating out, entertaining or other expenses and deposit what you save.

Housing:

- Do your own repairs.
- Be conscious of utilities usage - dim or turn off lights, conserve hot water, turn off air conditioning in the cooler months, limit long distance phone use.
- Plan meals.
- Shop garage sales.
- Make your own cleaning supplies.
- Buy do-it-yourself repair books and videos for minor home repairs.
- Put together a seasonal inspection checklist for your home and car to prevent costly repairs in the future.
- Recycle: towels, glass cups.

Food:

- Pack lunch.
- Cut down on eating out.
- Consider generic foods and use coupons.
- Save and eat leftovers.
- Use less tender cuts of meat.

- Limit shopping to once a week.
- Plan menus, make a grocery list.

Transportation:

- Use public transportation.
- Carpool.
- Get rid of one car, keep the smaller, more fuel-efficient car.

Recreation and Entertainment:

- Seek out family-oriented, inexpensive activities; use public parks and picnic areas.

- Give up smoking and drinking.
- Take vacations at home.
- Eliminate cable TV.

Personal:

- Select reasonably priced cosmetics and toiletries.
- Cut your children's hair.
- Groom your own pet.

Miscellaneous:

- Have legal aid evaluate alimony payments.
- Determine if the family benefits from two incomes