

Tips for Saving Money

Have you struggled making ends meet? Did you spend a little too much during the holidays? Here are a few cost-cutting tips that may help you to spend less and save.

- **Drive smarter.** The way you drive can be costly, even if you never get in an accident or get a ticket. Studies by EPA show that your car requires much more fuel when you accelerate forcefully. Also, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that each 5 miles you drive faster than 60 miles per hour is about the same as paying an additional 21 cents per gallon of gas.
- **Avoid the minimum payments trap.** If you only pay the minimum 2 percent of the balance on a \$5,000 of credit card debt at an annual percentage rate of 18 percent, you would accumulate more than \$12,000 in interest charges, and it would take 38 years to pay it off. Pay as much of your monthly credit card debt as you can to avoid or reduce interest charges; pay the bill in full as soon as you can, if you are able.
- **Plug in spending leaks.** Little expenses can add up. For instance spending \$8 eating out every workday instead of packing a lunch that costs \$2 will cost you an extra \$30,000 over 20 years.
- **Eat healthier.** You may think the fast-food value meals save you money, but if it leads to obesity, it may cost you in the end. A 2006 study from the Centers for Disease Control showed that obese adults spend nearly \$1,500 more per year on medical costs than those at healthy weights.
- **Save loose change.** Putting aside just 50 cents over a year will get you part of the way to a \$500 emergency fund.
- **Use the 24 hour rule.** This helps you avoid purchasing expensive or unnecessary items on impulse. Think over each nonessential purchase for at least 24 hours.
- **Unsubscribe.** Avoid temptations by unsubscribing from marketing emails to the stores you spend the most money at. By law each email is required to have an unsubscribe link, usually at the bottom of the email.
- **Volunteer at local events, concerts or festivals.** Usually festivals and events offer free admission to event volunteers. Contact the organizers of your favorite events to ask about volunteer opportunities.
- **Take advantage of your local library.** More and more libraries offer e-books, so you don't even need to visit in person. Many libraries are also parts of an intra-library loan system where you can borrow anything you want, but that they don't have, for a minimal shipping charge. Just ask. Some libraries also have things like tools and sewing machines to borrow.
- **Designate one day a week a "no spend day."** Reserve one night a week for a free family fun. Cook at home, and plan out free activities such as game night, watching a movie, or going to the park.
- **Don't skimp on preventive health care.** Routine dental checkup, help prevent fillings, root canals and dental crowns, which are expensive and not fun.
- **Cut laundry detergent and dryer sheet use in half.** The laundry detergent sold today is usually highly concentrated and powerful. Use the smallest suggested amount, and often you can use less and still get the clothes clean. In most cases using less washes more effectively because there is not soap left over. And tearing your dryer sheets in half gives the same result for half the price.

Source: America Saves.