

# Budgeting Tips & Resources

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## Budgeting Tips

1. **Record your purchases.** Beginning on the first day of a new month, get a receipt for everything you purchase. Stack and review receipts at the end of the month, and you will clearly be able to see where your money is going.
2. **Avoid using high-interest credit card and payday loans.** Payday loans typically charge interest rates of 500 percent, and the interest rate on credit card debts can run 25 percent. You can save hundreds, perhaps thousands, of dollars a year by paying off these high-cost debts.
3. **Create a grocery list and compare prices.** For necessary purchases — such as food and transportation and insurance— comparison shop to find the lowest prices. Also, take a list with you to the grocery store and stick to it. This will help you from buying items you don't need.
4. **Think before buying.** Wait at least 24 hours before making an expensive purchase. Acting on this principle will mean you have far fewer regrets about impulse purchases, and far more money for emergency savings.
5. **Build an emergency fund** to avoid having to take loans to pay for unexpected purchases. Emergency savings are usually best kept in a savings or share account, despite the low interest rates these accounts pay. Remember to keep a high enough balance in the account to avoid monthly fees.
6. **Limit spending for birthdays and holidays, especially Christmas.** A few well chosen gifts are likely to be more appreciated than a more costly pile of gifts chosen thoughtlessly in a shopping mall spree.
7. **Aim for short-term savings goals,** such as setting aside \$20 a week or month rather than long term savings goals, such as \$200 over a year. People save more successfully when they keep the short-term goal in sight.
8. **Set up an automatic transfer.** Ask your bank or credit union to automatically transfer funds each month from your checking to your savings account. Even as little as \$10 or \$15 a month helps. After all, that's \$120 or \$180 a year.
9. **Save loose change.** Put all your loose change in this savings account. For many people, that could add up to well over \$100 a year.
10. **Take advantage of an EITC.** Low to moderate-income workers qualify, each year, for an [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) that can be over \$1,000, and often more than \$2,000. IRS Publication 596 explains how to apply, or you can contact your local tax payer assistance center for in-person help. Pay down debt and save with at least half of the money you receive from this credit.
11. **Use employee benefits from your company.** If your employer matches retirement savings contributions, be sure to take advantage of that. Some employers match up to 100 percent of your contributions.
12. **Set aside money for non-essentials.** Create an envelope for money that you can spend on non-essential purchases (i.e. coffee, going to the movies, getting your nails done, alcoholic beverages, fast food, etc.).

\*To see more tips on how to save money, pay off debt, or create a budget, visit <https://americasaves.org/>.

## Free Budgeting Apps

### Good Budget

Use an online envelope system to set aside a portion of your monthly income for your specific needs while still saving money.

### Mint

Create a customized budget, receive alerts on account changes, and get a free credit score with advice on how to improve it.

### **Level Money**

Level Money helps you plan ahead for essentials like rent and bills, and then lets you set a target savings goal. We call the money that's left over, your "Spendable".

[www.levelmoney.com](http://www.levelmoney.com)

**Please see the attached templates or visit <http://www.dollartimes.com/download-and-print/> to create your own household budget.**

**United Way Information & Referral:** Dial 211 or 800-427-4626, or visit [www.211missouri.org](http://www.211missouri.org) for critical health and human services, everyday needs and in time of crisis—24-hour, seven-days-a-week availability. When appropriate, 2-1-1 specialists can connect callers directly with a service provider, eliminating the need to make another telephone call.