

Finding Money for Preparedness and More



Saving money has never been easy and this is even more so in today's economy. There are various reasons for this difficulty. Yeah the economy plays a big role, however the biggest reason is our **perception of things** from needs and time, to social demands.

Add to that we are constantly bombarded with marketing and advertising that alters our perceptions even more by saying we are soo busy that we need this more expensive use'n'toss tool to cut our time doing something; that this more expensive pre-prepared food is needed to get a meal on the table in a timely fashion; or we aren't showing our happiness and success unless we drive an expensive vehicle or live in an expensive house and so on.

Yet studies have shown that we Americans *average about 35-40 hours per week of free time; our work hours have been decreasing steadily for the past 40 years, we tend to overestimate our work hours by 5%-10% and 50+% of our free time is spent in front of the TV!*

To "find" more time see *Time – To Catch It, Ya Gotta Track It* @

[http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/time_%E2%80%93_to_catch_it_ya_gotta_track_it_\(apr_2015\).pdf](http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/time_%E2%80%93_to_catch_it_ya_gotta_track_it_(apr_2015).pdf)



Yes sir, perception is a powerful tool to get us to buy this or do that, and most personal finance businesses will NOT tell us about this. (Probably because they rely on the same marketing and advertising to get us to purchase their service or book to save money in the first place.)

Many "pros" will tell you become debt free. I find this just about impossible, since most of us will have at minimum, a mortgage and vehicle loan. However becoming as debt free as possible is a big step to becoming self-reliant and prepared.



So the first step to finding money to set aside is to do a **reality check on our life**. This will not only help us find more time, it will assist us in defining our Needs vs Wants; which is vital to creating a budget and hence saving money.

That's right **we need a budget**. I know, this is a pain in the arse, however the experts all agree on this one aspect to saving money and I do too.



The greatest tip to making a budget is determining **Needs vs Wants**. There is just no way to get around this. All of the suggestions for where to cut expenses are based on Needs vs Wants.

For tips and tricks see *Be In Control of Your Essentials & Desires* @ http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/frugality-be_in_control_of_your_essentials_desires_new_site.pdf



Here are some tips from the “budget experts”

Decide on Your Priorities: Different people have different priorities when it comes to saving money and what to save money for, so it makes sense to decide which savings goals are most important to you. *Are you saving for retirement? A vacation? Preparedness? A new car? A combination of these?*

Remember that setting priorities means making choices. If you want to focus on saving for retirement, some other goals might have to take a back seat while you make sure you're hitting your top targets.

- Determine how long you can wait to save up for a particular goal.
- How much you can and want to put away each month to reach it.

Define your “normal” monthly expenses: loans, mortgage, utilities, insurance, medical/dental, food, TV/Phone/Internet services, regular household and yard maintenance and the like.

- For loans or mortgages; list the minimum amount that is due each month.

- For Insurance; check out the various payment options and amounts. (Many are lower if you pay in “bulk” quarterly or annually. If you make this change, be sure to calculate how much you need to set aside each month to pay the quarterly or annual amount.)

Define your earnings: Include any interest on accounts, stocks and bonds and the like.

Get Financially Organized: This will eliminate making the mistake of missing a payment and will help you determine what is due when and how to schedule setting monies aside to pay the expenses.

If you do miss a payment, call your creditor and ask to have the penalty removed. They'll usually accommodate the request, at least the first time.



To assist in defining the above:

Record What You Earn and Spend for one month: Keep a record of everything. That means every coffee, every newspaper and every snack you purchase for the entire month; every “win” in the office pool or lottery. For purchases collect receipts for every expense, put them in an envelope and receipts at the end of the month.

You may find a lot of “small” expenses that add up to big time savings if you, say eat out one time less each week or get your hair and nails done every 6 weeks instead of every 4 weeks.

Once you have your data, organize these numbers by category—for example: gas, groceries, mortgage, paycheck, lotto win and so on—and get the total amount for each.



Now you can make a budget: Be sure to include **savings goals** and how long it will take to achieve each. Short term goals of say, setting aside \$20 a week or month, rather than long term savings goal of \$200 per year, tend to be easier to achieve. ($\$20 \text{ week} \times 52 = \1040.00 yr ; $\$20 \text{ month} \times 12 = \240.00 yr).

For additional budgeting information see *Budgeting for Mere Mortals* @ http://formernymurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/budgeting_for_mere_mortals_vr_2_new_site.pdf

Some common goals which can usually take 1-3 years are:

- Starting an emergency fund to cover 6 months to a year of *necessity* living expenses (in case of job loss or other emergencies)
- Saving money for a vacation

- Saving to buy a new car
- Saving to pay taxes (if they are not already deducted by your employer)

Some common long-term goals that usually take *more than 3 years* are:

- Saving for retirement
- Putting money away for your child's college education
- Saving for a down payment on a house or to remodel your current home

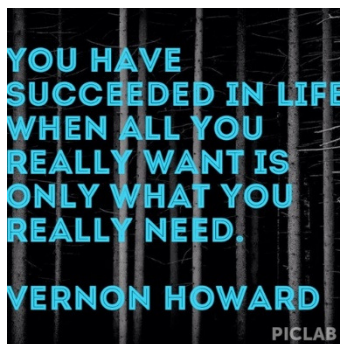
Get the whole family involved in saving, even the children!



Save Loose Change: Save your loose change in a jar.

- Every couple of months, check it for purer metal coins. Generally these are coins dated 1964 and earlier. (For a complete list of metal contents of US coins see <http://www.usacoinbook.com/coin-melt-values/>.)
 - Set these coins aside in a safe place that is easy to get to. They will be worth much more than their face value in a SHTF environment.
- Put the rest of these coins in your savings account.

For many people, that could add up to well over \$100 a year. Think about it, if you have fifty cents per day of loose change, over the course of a year will allow you to save \$182.50, nearly 40% of a \$500 emergency fund.



A Family Experiment for Saving Money

One easy trick is to have a family meeting and decide that for the next two weeks, every time you get ready to pull out your wallet to purchase ANYTHING;

- Stop and ask yourself if you will die in the next month if you don't purchase this item right now.

- If the answer is NO, every OTHER time don't purchase that item, be it a meal out or a movie ticket.
- When you get home, put this money into a household can or jar.

At the end of the two weeks, have another family meeting and count the money in your money jar. Most of us will have \$20-50 dollars in that jar!

Continue with this savings method if it works for your family, just put the monies in a savings account every couple of weeks so you can watch your savings grow.

Accumulative Saving Money Plan (per week for 1 year)

Or you can try one of the **Weekly Savings Goals for 1 Year Plans**

(http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/weekly_savings_goals_for_1_year_plans.pdf). The nickel and dime are great for children and super tight budgets. The quarter and dollar are for those of you that have more unallocated funds available on a weekly basis.

Again, be sure to periodically transfer the monies from your money jar into a savings account.

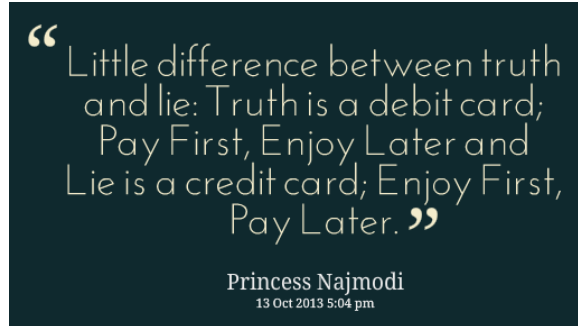


Ways to save via your Bank or Credit Union

- **Find a bank that is for you:**
 - There are many free checking account plans, so there is no reason to pay a fee of any kind, maintenance or otherwise.
 - Even though interest rates are not what they used to be, you can still earn some serious bucks with savings and banking accounts that offer interest.
- **Set up automatic transfers** each month from checking to savings or after each pay check is deposited. Even as little as \$10 or \$15 a month helps. After all, that's \$120 or \$180 a year.
- **Avoid bouncing checks and overdraft fees.** Many banks and credit unions offer "overdraft insurance" that is free. This insurance is really an automatic transfer from savings to checking if a check come through within 3 business days of your paycheck deposit. The \$20-30 you save by not bouncing a check each month would save you enough money to nearly fully fund a \$500 emergency savings account.
- **Consolidate Debt:** If you have debt spread out over say several credit cards, or "on account" balances from various services, ask your bank or credit union what consolidation options they offer. Often you can not only reduce the monthly amount needed, but the interest rate as well. The

key here is NOT go crazy and rebuild your debt balances with these places. **Remember: Taking out a consolidation loan, DOES NOT get you out of debt!**

- **Participate in a local Investment Development Account (IDA) program.** In return for attending financial education sessions and agreeing to save for a home, education, or business, you typically receive \$2 for every \$1 you save through an IDA program. So, saving \$25 each month could end up as \$900 at the end of a year.



Credit and Debit Cards are another place to save a few extra bucks

- **Make your monthly credit card payment on time.** The \$30-35 you save by not being charged a late fee each month on one card would save you most of the money you need for \$500 in emergency savings.
- **Use debit and credit cards prudently.** To minimize interest charges, try to limit credit card purchases to those you can pay off in full at the end of the month. If you use a debit card, don't rely on an overdraft feature to spend money you don't have. With either approach, you'll have more money available for emergency savings.
- **Use only the ATMs of your bank or credit union.** Using the ATM of another financial institution once a week could well cost you \$3 a withdrawal, or more than \$150 over the course of a year.
- **Request a reduction in the interest rate on your credit cards.** As with home equity loans, credit card companies *sometimes* are willing to reduce the interest rate. It can't hurt to ask. If your credit card company won't help you, switch to a low interest credit card or a one of several 0% APR credit cards.
- **Remove your credit card numbers from your online accounts:** It's easy to spend online when you have your card information stored in an account – just click and buy. The best way to break this habit is to simply delete your card from the account. That way, when you're tempted to spend, you'll be forced to spend the time to dig out your card – and really think about why you're spending this money.
- **Hide your credit cards:** If you are tempted to purchase something because a credit card is in easy reach in your wallet then; Take your credit cards and put them in a safe place in your home. If you argue that you need it for "emergencies," just be sure to keep a small amount of cash hidden in your wallet for these emergencies. Don't keep plastic on you until you have the willpower to not use it even when you're sorely tempted.
- **Reduce credit card debt by \$1,000.** That \$1,000 debt reduction will probably save you \$150-200 a year, and much more if you're paying penalty rates of 20-30%. **Better yet become credit card debt free!**



Loans, Mortgages and Cash Advances

- **Avoid using the high-interest credit card "cash advance" fees 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.
- **Get rid of Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI):** If your down payment was less than 20%, you are probably paying PMI. Once you have a 20% cushion through reducing your debt and home appreciation, contact your mortgage company to start the process of removing the PMI.
- **Request a reduction in the interest rate for your home equity line of credit.** One person got a reduction of around 0.50%. If you are looking for a home equity loan, Quicken Loans is a great place to check out available options.
- **Refinance your mortgage.** If you can reduce your interest rate by one percent or more, it is often beneficial to refinance. This is particularly true for those with high rates due to less than stellar credit scores. If your score has improved, you may qualify for a better rate. Start by asking your current mortgage lender about lower rates.
- **Consolidate your student loans:** Interest rates are quite low right now, so it might be worthwhile to consolidate your student loans into one low-rate package. Look into the various student loan consolidation packages – even a 1% reduction on a \$10,000 loan saves you \$100 a year – and your loan is probably bigger than that. **Remember: Taking out a consolidation loan, DOES NOT get you out of debt!**
- **Get on an automatic debt repayment plan for any student loans you have:** Many student loans offer a rate reduction if you sign up for their automatic debt repayment plan. Others loans offer the same thing. This way, not only do you save a few bucks a month, you don't have to go to the effort of actually paying the bill. Our automatic plan saved us about \$60 a year.
- **Utilize online bill pay with your bank:** This serves two purposes. First, it keeps you in much closer contact with your money, as you can keep a very close eye on your balance and be in much less danger of over drafting. Second, it saves you money on stamps and paper checks by allowing you to just fill in an online form, click submit, and have your bill paid. Try it out – and take advantage of it if you're not already.
- **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, keep a high enough balance in the account to avoid monthly fees.



Saving Options Your Employer May Offer

Believe it or not your employer may offer some good savings deals. Find out about all of the benefits of your job. Spend some time with an HR person finding out about all the benefits of your job – you might be surprised at what you might find.

- **If the company you work for offers** discounted rates for say computers and such, fitness center memberships, movie tickets and passes to summer festivals and sporting events, free personal improvement opportunities, take advantage! Check your corporate intranet or talk to your human resources representative.
- **If your employer matches retirement savings contributions**, be sure to take advantage of that. Some employers match up to 100 percent of your contributions.
- **Use “flexible spending accounts” or FSA’s.** FSAs allow you to pay certain medical, dental and child care expenses using pre-tax dollars. Enrollment is once a year with most employers. Also be sure to calculate your minimum medical, dental and child care expenses as if you over pay into these accounts you usually loose the monies.



TV, Phone and Internet Services are a good place to find some extra savings:

Take a good long look at your phone (cell and landline), TV and internet services and assess your communications costs. As Internet and wireless use grows, many consumers are overpaying for unneeded communications capacity.

- **Be aware of your cell phone costs and how to reduce them.** Cell phone use has dramatically increased communications expenditures in many households.
 - Understand peak calling periods, area coverage, roaming, and termination charges.

- Make sure your calling plan matches the pattern of calls you typically make.
- Double check your "need" to be connected to the internet and your email from your cell phone. You can save a bundle by dropping the internet from your cell phone. Most people find they can get by just fine with calls and simple text messaging, without the wireless internet connection.
- **Some people will "bundle" and change their landline to a VoIP home phone or eliminate their landline altogether, to save money.** However be sure that is good for you.
 - If you are in an area that loses electrical power during seasonal storms, this might not be wise, as most non-VoIP landline phone service is on a different electrical grid than standard home electricity. Also keep in mind that ALL non-VoIP landlines have automatic address notification when 9-1-1 is called.
 - Most cell phones have GPS locating capabilities, even if the customer is not paying/utilizing it. This is true of all cell phones, *but most and 9-1-1 calls from a cell phone DO NOT need a warrant by public safety to activate the GPS.*
- **Buy Your Next Cell Phone from Amazon:** It may seem odd to buy a cell phone from Amazon, but they offer all of the newest phones (e.g., Droid, Storm 2, Vibrant from AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon Wireless.) Amazon offers free 2-day shipping and low prices without the hassle of mail-in rebate forms. Search for AmazonWireless.
- **Communicate by e-mail rather than by phone.** If you're on-line, e-mail communications are virtually free. Even for subscribers, landline and wireless calls often carry per-minute charges.
- **Consider writing letters instead of making frequent phone calls.** Thoughtful letters are usually far more highly valued than phone conversations, and they are often saved by recipients for future reading.
- **Consider purchasing a refurbished computer, laptop, notepad, etc.** It is a great way to buy not only computers, but iPods and iPhones as well.
- Ask to **purchase the stores "demo" PC, TV, stereo, etc** - you know the one that has been in use on the display floor? Often these are sold for a lot less or with 2 years of free insurance on the product.
- **Use Open Source software when possible.** Example: use GIMP instead of Photoshop. GIMP is free and even though it isn't Photoshop by a long shot. Check out these freeware sites:
 - The 23 best freeware programs for windows <http://christianpf.com/best-freeware-programs-utilities-windows/>
 - 30 Essential Pieces Of Free (and Open) Software for Windows <http://www.thesimpledollar.com/30-essential-pieces-of-free-and-open-software-for-windows/>
 - Your new PC needs these 22 free, excellent programs <http://www.pcworld.com/article/2082305/your-new-pc-needs-these-22-free-programs.html>
 - The Best Free Software <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2381528,00.asp>
 - The Best Windows Software <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/best-windows-software/>
 - Best Free Windows Desktop Software - Editors Choice Selection <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-windows-desktop-software.htm>
 - Lifehacker Pack for Windows: Our List of the Essential Windows Apps <http://lifehacker.com/lifehacker-pack-for-windows-our-list-of-the-best-windo-787533613>
 - Top 10 Incredibly Useful Windows Programs to Have On Hand <http://lifehacker.com/top-10-incredibly-useful-windows-programs-to-have-on-ha-1584009886>
 - Software <http://www.tomsguide.com/t/software/>



Possible Insurance Savings:

- **Re-evaluate your insurance coverage for home, contents, life, auto, boat, RV, etc.** Determine if you are covered appropriately or not and adjust accordingly. Granted you may find you are under-insured somewhere, but better to find out before you make a claim, rather than after.
- **Shop around for insurance:** Before renewing your existing policies each year, check out the rates of competing companies (see the website of your state insurance department for auto and homeowners' insurers). Their annual premiums may well be several hundred dollars lower.
- Depending on your needs it may pay to **switch to Term Life Insurance**. If your children are now on their own, or if your spouse works and the like, term life is the best bang for the buck. The annual premiums on a term life policy would typically fully fund an emergency savings account. Remember *insurance is not an investment* and in most cases, *any* life insurance product other than term, is just not worth the extra cost.
- **Raise the deductibles** on auto and homeowners' insurance: Being willing to pay \$500-1,000 on a claim, rather than only \$100-250, can reduce annual premiums by as much as several hundred dollars.
- **Consider dropping credit insurance coverage on installment loans.** Many consumers don't need credit insurance because they have sufficient assets to protect themselves in the event of death, disability, or unemployment. Terminating this coverage often reduces financing costs by three percentage points, a savings of about \$1,000 on a four-year \$20,000 installment loan.
- **Pass on extended warranties:** A \$129 two year extension on a \$300 product is just not worth it. Warranties are insurance, and we rarely need to insure such a small amount.
- **Think before submitting an insurance claim,** call your insurance agent to discuss the impact to your premium is if you do file. Consider not submitting a claim on a loss that is less than twice the deductible. So for a \$250 deductible on an auto loss, the out of pocket cost is any loss up to \$500. Why? The \$250 you'd receive from the insurance company is not worth the increased premiums you will likely have to pay.
- **Pay car insurance semi-annually.** Many companies offer quarterly and semi-annual, as well as annual payment options. The shorter the payment interval, the more it costs.
- **Pay your life insurance annually.** Insurance companies charge you more if you pay monthly. Again the shorter the payment interval, the more it costs.



Ways to save around the House and with Utilities

- **Ask your local electric or gas utility for a free or low-cost home energy audit.** The audit may reveal inexpensive ways to reduce home heating and cooling costs by hundreds of dollars a year. Keep in mind that a payback period of less than three years, or even five years, usually will save you lots of money in the long-term.
- **Weatherproof your home:** Caulk holes and cracks that let warm air escape in the winter and cold air escape in the summer. Your local hardware store has materials, and quite possibly useful advice, about inexpensively stopping unwanted heat or cooling loss.
- **Air seal your home:** Most homes have some air leaks that make the job of keeping it cool in summer and warm in winter that much harder – and that much more costly for you. Spend an afternoon air sealing your home – the DoE has a guide on basic airsealing @ http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/your_home/insulation_airsealing/index.cfm/mytopic=11260
- **Check the insulation in your home:** Extra insulation can easily pay for itself in one or two years, and it helps save the environment, too.
- **Install a programmable thermostat:** These devices regulate the temperature in your house automatically according to the schedule that you set. Thus, when you're not home, it allows the heating or cooling to turn off for several hours, saving you on your energy bill. A programmable thermostat can easily cut your energy bill by 10 to 20%. Nest is the new generation programmable thermostat that learns and connects to WiFi so it can be controlled remotely, great if you travel a lot, just remember ANYTHING WiFi is a security risk and trackable by hackers or government types.
- **Lower the temperature on your thermostat in the winter and raise it in the summer.** For every degree that you lower your home's temperature during the cooler months, you can subtract about 5% from your bill.
- **Convert to a gas or solar water heater:** They are more efficient and will save you money in the long run.
- **Add extra insulation to your water heater.** If you have a water heater built before 2004, you can wrap it with an insulating jacket and save about \$30 a year on your water heating bill.
- **Water Use Savings - Fix Leaks:** You can significantly reduce hot water use by simply repairing leaks in fixtures -- faucets and showerheads -- or pipes. A leak of one drip per second can cost \$1 per month.
- **Water Use Savings:** If you pay for water use, live in an arid or drought area, installing low-flow fixtures and aerators will save water and money. Aerators for faucets and showers require an initial capital investment, but they often pay back the investment in less than a year, especially when they are used often.
 - Water use is typically measured in *Gallons Per Minute* (gpm) or *Gallons Per Flush* (gpf)

- Some utility companies and cities offer rebates or other incentives for buying high-efficiency toilets or plumbing fixtures. Check with your local agencies or take a look at the WaterSense rebate finder at http://www.epa.gov/watersense/rebate_finder_saving_money_water.html
- **Water Use Savings - Faucets:** The aerator -- the screw-on tip of the faucet -- ultimately determines the maximum flow rate of a faucet. Typically, new kitchen faucets come equipped with aerators that restrict flow rates to 2.2 gpm, while new bathroom faucets have ones that restrict flow rates from 1.5 to 0.5 gpm. Aerators are inexpensive to replace and they can be one of the most cost-effective water conservation measures. For maximum water efficiency, purchase aerators that have flow rates of no more than 1.0 gpm. Some aerators even come with shut-off valves that allow you to stop the flow of water without affecting the temperature.
- **Water Use Savings - Showerheads:** For maximum water efficiency, select a shower head with a flow rate of less than 2.5 gpm. There are two basic types of low-flow showerheads: aerating and laminar-flow. Aerating showerheads mix air with water, forming a misty spray. Laminar-flow showerheads form individual streams of water. If you live in a humid climate, you might want to use a laminar-flow showerhead because it won't create as much steam and moisture as an aerating one. Before 1992, some showerheads had flow rates of 5.5 gpm.

Therefore, if you have fixtures that pre-date 1992, you might want to replace them if you're not sure of their flow rates.

- Be aware: Those "luxury shower towers" or pie-plate-sized, monsoon-downpour-imitating fixtures are major water-wasters; they can use as much as 20 gallons of water per minute!
- Using ultra-low-flow showerheads will also save you money on your energy bills, by reducing the demand on your water heater. According to the WaterSense program, a household could save 300 kilowatt hours of electricity annually, enough to power its television use for about a year.
- **Have your furnace tuned every two years** and you will, "save about 1250 lbs of carbon dioxide and 10% on your heating bills."
- **Set your water heater to 120 degrees** (Fahrenheit for the international folks). Even if you don't have a temperature gauge on your water heater, they suggest turning it down, "until the water feels hot, not scalding."
- **Water Use Savings - High-efficiency, Water Saving Toilets:** Toilets are often the source of the most water use (and water wasting) within a home, accounting for nearly 30 percent of an average home's indoor water consumption. If you have a toilet(s) that uses more than 1.6 gallons of water per flush (gpf)—as do almost all toilets installed before 1994.
- **Dishwashers:** It's commonly assumed that washing dishes by hand saves hot water. However, washing dishes by hand several times a day can be more expensive than operating an energy-efficient dishwasher. You can consume less energy with an energy-efficient dishwasher when properly used and when only operating it with full loads.
- **Clothes Washers:** Unlike dishwashers, clothes washers don't require a minimum temperature for optimum cleaning. Therefore, to reduce energy costs, you can use either cold or warm water for most laundry loads. Cold water is always sufficient for rinsing. Inefficient clothes washers can cost three times as much to operate than energy-efficient ones.
- **Use cold water to wash your clothes** and you can save 50% of the energy that you would use if you used hot water. Save the hot water washes for those really dirty items like workout clothing and towels.
- **Shut vents in unused rooms:** This isn't advisable if you have forced air heating, but shutting vents in unused rooms can save on your heating and cooling bill.
- **Use window coverings to block or let in sunshine:** In summer, use these coverings to block sunlight, keeping your house cool. In winter, open the coverings to let sunshine warm the house. You could easily save more than \$100 annually while being more comfortable.

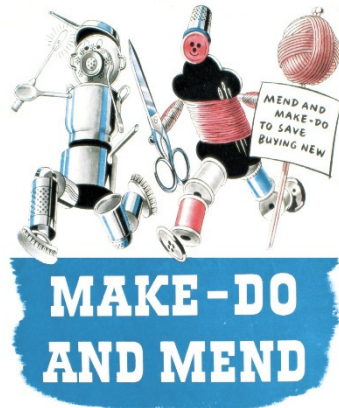
- **Switch to native and drought tolerant plants.** Try edible landscaping or xeriscaping.
- **Adjust your lawnmower to the 3-inch setting.** They say that longer grass holds moisture longer, so you will not have to water as much.
- **Do some basic home and auto maintenance on a regular schedule:** Instead of just waiting until something breaks to deal with it, develop a monthly maintenance schedule where you go around your home (and your car) and perform a bit of maintenance where it's needed. This little activity, taking you just an hour or two a month, will keep things from breaking down and help you see problems before they become disasters.
- **Choose home repair contractors wisely.** Favor contractors who have successfully performed work for people you know. Insist on a written, fixed-price bid. Don't make full payment until satisfactory completion of the work.
- **Be diligent about turning off lights before you leave:** If you spend one minute turning off lights before a two hour trip, that's the equivalent of earning \$50 an hour. That's some impressive savings, particularly if you do it before longer trips. The key is to use less energy, particularly when you're not using the device.
- **Change out Incandescent bulbs where possible:** The only choices here are CFL or LED. CFL are cheaper than LED, yet have mercury in them. CFLs tend to use about 25% of the electricity of an incandescent – LEDs use about 2%. **Mix and match to lower costs;** example: Put LEDs in closets and out of the way places, use CFLs for hall and some room lighting, and use incandescent bulbs (until the other bulbs get better) where you read and do other eye-intensive activities. This will trim a significant amount from your electric bill.
- **Reevaluate the stuff in the rooms in your house – Do a Contents and Usage Audit:** Go into a room and go through every single item in it. Do you really need that item? Are you happy that it's there, or would you be just fine if it were not? If you can find stuff to get rid of, get rid of it – it just creates clutter and it might have some value to others. You also improve the perceived value of your house – and you're likely to get a lot of cleaning done in the process. It's a frugal win-win-win. For detailed information on Contents Audits see *Can you Afford your House Lifestyle?*
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- **Live relatively near your workplace.** While this isn't always possible, driving 5,000 miles less a year can lower transportation costs by more than \$1,000.
- **Rent out unused space in your home:** Do you have an extra bedroom that's not being used? Rent it out. In our home, we could, if times were tough, rent out our entire basement – it has a “living room,” a bedroom, and a bathroom and has a stairwell right by the kitchen. If we found the right person, this would bring in a lot of extra money.
- **Don't pay for space you don't need- Buy a smaller house:** Americans have relatively large houses and apartments. Think about more efficiently using space so you can purchase or rent less square footage. For detailed information on Home Usage Audits see *Can you Afford your House Lifestyle?*
[http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/can_you_afford_your_house_lifestyle_\(updated_mar_2015\)_new_site.pdf](http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/can_you_afford_your_house_lifestyle_(updated_mar_2015)_new_site.pdf)
Home Usage Audit Worksheet
[http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/can_you_afford_your_house_lifestyle_-home_usage_audit_worksheets_\(updated_mar_2015\).pdf](http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/can_you_afford_your_house_lifestyle_-home_usage_audit_worksheets_(updated_mar_2015).pdf)

Home Contents Audit Worksheet

[http://formerlynurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/can_you_afford_your_house_lifestyle-home_contents_audit_worksheets_\(updated_mar_2015\).pdf](http://formerlynurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/can_you_afford_your_house_lifestyle-home_contents_audit_worksheets_(updated_mar_2015).pdf)

- **Look for a cheaper place to live:** The cost of living in a neighboring town may be lower than the town you currently reside in. In Maine a neighboring town was almost \$800 per year cheaper in property taxes and \$300 per year cheaper in waste management fees. Take a serious look about moving to a less expensive area – if you can find work there, then a move can definitely put you in better financial shape. Rural areas offer great deals as long as you are willing to travel for cultural opportunities and amenities.
- **Request a discount on trash service.** For some reason this is a highly competitive business. Not every area has municipal waste management. If you live where this is so, shop around for your waste management service. If you find a better offer for trash service, call your current trash company and ask them to beat the offer.
- **Buy appliances based on reliability, not what's cheapest at the store:** It's worth the time to do a bit of research when you buy a new appliance. A reliable, energy efficient washer and dryer might cost you quite a bit now, but if it continually saves you energy and lasts for fifteen years, you'll save significant money in the long run. When you need to buy an appliance, research it – start with back issues of Consumer Reports at the library. An hour's worth of research can easily save you hundreds of dollars.
- **Buy energy efficient appliances:** Look for the Energy Star on appliances and consider the annual energy cost before buying. More efficient appliances cost more, but you make up the extra cost and then some over the life of the product.
- **Do a "maintenance run" on your appliances:** Check them to make sure there isn't any dust clogging them and that they're fairly clean. Look behind the appliances, and use your vacuum to gently clear away dust. Check all of the vents, especially on refrigerators, dryers, and heating and cooling units. The less dust you have blocking the mechanics of these devices, the more efficiently they'll run (saving you on your energy bill) and the longer they'll last (saving you on replacement costs).
- **Make sure all your electrical devices are on a surge protector power strip:** This is especially true of your entertainment center and your computer equipment. A power surge can damage these electronics very easily, so spend the money for a basic surge protector and keep your equipment plugged into such a device.
- **To combat stealth power use:** Use a power strip to turn off all "instant on" devices. Basically anything with a remote is "instant on". The 40-50 average items in a home that pull vampire power add up to about 30% of the monthly electric bill. Understand if you do this that your TV remote won't work until you turn the TV's power strip on and instead of the picture coming up in 2-4 seconds it can take 5-7 seconds.
 - **I choose to avoid items like a "smart power strip".** A device like the SmartStrip LCG4 basically cuts power to all devices on the strip depending on the status of the first item on the strip. So, if you have your workstation hooked up to this, every time you power down your workstation, your monitor powers down, your printer powers down, your scanner powers down, and so on. You can do the same thing with your entertainment console – when you turn off the television, the cable/satellite box also goes off, as does the video game console, the VCR, the DVD player, and so on. *Although this can save you a lot of electricity and significantly trim your power bill, these devices are also "snooping" devices that report on your use of the devices plugged into it.*
- **Invest in a deep freezer:** A deep freezer, after the initial investment, is a great bargain. Understand that any chest deep freezer will be cheaper to run than any upright deep freezer. (dah - cold air sinks, open the door on an upright and all the cold air falls out!) You can use it to store all sorts of bulk foods, which enables you to pay less per pound of it at the market. Even better, you can store lots of meals

prepared in advance, enabling you to just go home and pop something homemade (and cheap) in the oven.



Potential Clothing Savings

- **Assess clothing in terms of quality as well as price:** An inexpensive shirt or coat is a poor bargain if it wears out in less than a year. Consider fabric, stitching, washability and other quality related factors in your selection of clothes.
- **Assess clothing in terms of care:** Avoid clothing that requires dry cleaning, special washing that your washer is not capable of doing or must be ironed to look nice.
- **Simplify your wardrobe:** Don't buy clothes that will only work as one outfit. Look for clothes that you will be able to wear with many other things, creating multiple outfits. Instead of buying that green and purple striped coat that will only go with one or two outfits, you could get a solid color gray that will work most of what you wear. Spend less money on the trendy items that won't be in style long, and spend more on quality items.
- **Clean clothes inexpensively:** Wash and iron clothes yourself. If you use a cleaner, compare prices at different establishments. A 50 cent difference in cleaning a shirt, for example, can add up to \$100 a year.
- **Hang Up & Air Out:** Americans wash their clothing more frequently than any other nation. Washing breaks down fabrics and thread so the more we wash something, the less it lasts before needing to be replaced. If you hang up and air out that shirt, skirt or pants immediately after any light use, you will not need to wash it each and every time it is worn.
- **Consider purchasing previously-used clothes** from Good Will, second-hand stores, or school or church thrift sales. With a little effort, you can find low-priced, high-quality used clothing items that can be worn for many years.
- **Mend and Repair:** Don't toss out a shirt because of a broken button – sew a new one on with some closely-matched thread. Don't toss out pants because of a hole in them – put in a patch of some sort and save them for times when you're working around the house. Simple sewing can be done by anyone – it just takes a few minutes and it saves a lot of money by keeping you from buying new clothes when you don't really need to.
- **Learn how to dress minimally:** Buy clothes that mix and match well and you'll not need nearly as many clothes. If you have five pants, seven shirts, and seven ties that all go together, you have almost an endless wardrobe right there just by mixing and matching.
- **Look for sales at discount outlets:** There are huge price differences between clothing on sale at discount stores and that sold regularly at many department and specialty stores, though keep in mind that prices at the latter are often deeply discounted.

- **Go through your clothes – all of them:** Go through everything that you have in your closets and dressers, and see what you might find. Get rid of anything you haven't worn in the past year and will not wear in the next year, along with anything that no longer fits and is not of sentimental value. You can have a yard sale with it, take it to a consignment shop, or even donate it for the tax deduction – all of which turn old stuff you don't use any more into money in your pocket. This is often a huge psychological load off you mind. Take the clothes at the back of the closet and bring them to the front and suddenly your wardrobe will feel completely different. Take the clothes buried in your dresser and pull them to the top.



Ways to Save with Family and Friends

- **Agree to limit gift giving:** Agree in advance to limit the gifts and save everybody some money. These limits not only tend to reduce expenditures; they will also be greatly appreciated by the least affluent family members and friends.
- **Make your own gifts** instead of buying stuff from the store: You can make food mixes, candles, bread, cookies, soap, picture frames and all kinds of other things at home quite easily and inexpensively. These make spectacular gifts for others because they involve your homemade touch, plus quite often they're consumable, meaning they don't wind up filling someone's closet with junk. Even better – include a personal handwritten note with the gift. This will make it even more special than anything you could possibly buy down at the mall, plus it saves you money.
- **Give a gift of a service instead of an item:** Right up there with DIY gifts! Take a mason jar and fancy it up a bit. Print off your own specialty "coupon", say "two hours of babysitting time" for any new parents on your list, or "two hours of yard work" for a new homeowner, "Pet Sitting" for a friend who has the chance to travel and the like.
- **Plan gift-giving well in advance.** That will give you time to decide on the most thoughtful gifts, which usually are not the most expensive ones. And if these gifts are products that must be purchased, you will have the opportunity to look for sales. I keep all my wrapping paper and gifts in one closet. I shop year round, so when I get home I can wrap the gift and put the gift card on it. I often select "non-specialty" wrapping paper so the gift can be used for Christmas, birthday or anniversary.
- **Invite friends over instead of going out:** Almost every activity at home is less expensive than going out. Invite some friends over and have a cookout or a potluck meal, then play some cards and have a few drinks. Everyone will have fun, the cost will be low, and the others will likely reciprocate not long afterwards.
- **Encourage your friends to do less expensive activities:** This can be tricky to do, however if you are the first to suggest an activity, like say going to a park and shooting hoops instead of going golfing with its green fees, you save money and still get that socializing time in. Same holds true with suggesting low to no cost community events.
- **Cards and Gift Wrap:** Buy greeting cards in bulk at the Dollar store or the party store. This will help you to save a lot of money and you won't have to make an extra trip every time you need one.

- o BlueMountain.com has a number of cards you can send to save you money while celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, and more.
- o FreePrintable.com lets you print out all kinds of goodies to help you save money including cards, calendars, worksheets, coupons, and more! It's fun to print your own products, give it a shot!



Entertainment Saving Tips

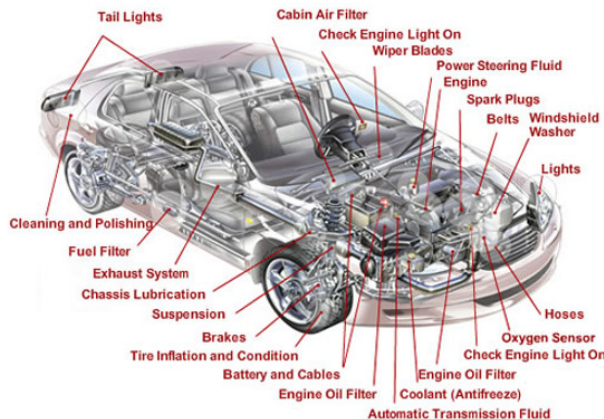
- **Hit the library – hard!** Don't look at a library as just a place to get old books. Look at it as a free place to do all sorts of things. I know people who have used the library to learn a foreign language, meet people, use the Internet anonymously, check out movies and CDs, grab local free newspapers, and keep up on community events. Best of all, it doesn't cost a dime.
- **Read more:** Reading is one of the cheapest – and most beneficial – hobbies around. Most towns have a library available to the public – just go there and check out some books that interest you. Then, spend some of your free time in a cozy place in your house, just reading away. You'll learn something new, improve your reading ability, enjoy yourself, and not have to spend a dime.
- **Read magazines at the library or online.** Too many magazines can cost a fortune. And how many times have you bought a magazine based on the cover and been disappointed by the lack of substance. At the library you can read magazines for free. And many magazines now offer their content for free online.
- **Get DVDs from the library.** Many libraries now have movies on DVD that can be checked out. If your library offers this service, it sure beats paying Blockbuster or Netflix.



- **Borrow or Swap books, CD's & DVD's rather than purchasing them:** Borrowing books and reading magazines at your local library, rather than purchasing reading material, can save you hundreds of dollars a year. Try a book swap where you can get credit for books you turn in and apply to books you are "purchasing" to read.

- **Attend high school rather than college or pro sports events.** High school sports events rarely cost more than \$5 and are often free, with hot dogs and sodas typically costing \$1-2. College and pro football and basketball games rarely cost less than \$20, and their concessions are usually several times more expensive.
- **Research free or inexpensive entertainment in your community:** Use local newspapers and websites to learn about free or low-cost parks, museums, film showings, sports events, and other places which you and your family would enjoy.
 - **Check out what your town's parks and recreation board has to offer:** My town has several wonderful parks, free basketball and tennis courts, free disc golf, trails, and lots of other stuff just there waiting to be used. You can go have fun for hours out in the wonderful outdoors, playing sports, hiking on trails, or trying other activities – and it's all there for free. All you have to do is discover it.
 - **Dig into your community calendar:** There are often tons of free events going on in your town that you don't even know about. Stop by the local library or by city hall and ask how you can get ahold of a listing of upcoming community events, and make an effort to hit the interesting ones: You can often get free meals, free entertainment, and free stuff just by paying attention – even better, you'll get in touch with what's going on around you.
- **Buy video games that have a lot of replay value** – and don't acquire new ones until you've mastered what you have. Focus on games that can be played over and over and over again. Good targets include puzzle games and long, involved quest games – they maximize the value of your gaming dollar.
- **DVD's, CD's and Games can be purchased used** from a good number of businesses.
- **Get DVDs from Red Box.** If your library doesn't offer DVDs, get your moves from Red Box. It costs just one dollar per night.
- **Swap books, music, and DVDs cheaply on the internet via services** like PaperBackSwap: You can very easily swap the books and CDs and DVDs you've grown bored with via the internet with others. Clean out your media collection, and trade them with others online. The best part? You'll get a flood of new books (or CDs or DVDs) to enjoy, mailed right to you – for free.
 - PaperBackSwap.com allows you to list books you'd like to swap with other members. They boast over 4.5 million available books, and books are mailed to you for free.
 - It doesn't get much better than Amazon.com . They have just about every book imaginable, and you can buy almost all of them used.
 - Check out thrift stores for used books
 - Swaptree.com has a cool service that allows you to trade your books, CDs, and DVDs with others online. The service is free, the only expense is the shipping cost of your item.
 - SwapADVD.com is similar to PaperBackSwap.com, but it's for DVDs! Watch your favorites and discover more with this simple DVD exchange service. The cost is just about as low as you can go.
- **Get rid of unread magazine subscriptions:** Do you have a pile of unread magazines sitting around your house? Likely, it's the result of a subscription that you're not reading. Not only should you not renew that magazine, you should give their subscription department a call and try to cancel for a refund – sometimes, they'll give you the prorated amount back. I've had to cull my subscriptions in the past, but I've never regretted it.
- **Subscribe to magazines that are must reads.** If you must have a certain magazine each month, subscribe. Subscriptions offer substantial savings over the cost at the newsstand. Update: Amazon offers some great deals on personal finance magazines .
- **Cancel unused club memberships:** Are you paying dues at a club that you never or rarely use? Like, for instance, a gym membership or a country club membership? Cancel these club memberships, even if you think you might use them again someday – you can always renew the membership at a later date if it turns out that you actually do miss it.

- **Cut down on your vacation spending:** Instead of going on a big, extravagant trip, pack up the car and see some of America some years for vacation. One of the best vacations I've ever taken was when my son was an infant – we just packed up the car and drove around Minnesota, eventually camping for a few days along the north shore of Lake Superior. For a week long relaxing vacation, it was incredibly cheap and quite memorable, too.
- **Eliminate some cable service:** Note that I'm not recommending getting rid of cable completely, although that's certainly a way to save money. If you must have cable, take a look at all the charges on your cable bill and consider getting rid of some of the service. Try it for a month and see if you really miss those last 500 channels.
 - **Give up premium cable channels** or better yet, cable all together. It's a lot cheaper to rent one film a week than watch one on premium cable channels that may cost more than \$500 a year.
 - **Slow down your internet service:** A friend of mine went to the slower internet service option with their cable company and saved \$15 per month. He claims he hasn't noticed a difference when surfing the Net.
- **Consider MythTV PVR in replace of TiVo type services.** A friend just ran across MythTV and although still investigating it, they like it so far. He pays \$15 a month to his cable company for a DVR box and would love to save that money.
- **Don't go to stores or shopping centers for entertainment:** Doing so is just an encouragement to spend money you don't really have on stuff you don't really need. Instead, find other places to entertain yourself – the park, the basketball court, a museum, a friend's house, or even in your own home. Don't substitute shopping for entertainment and you'll be way better off.
- **Don't spend big money entertaining your children:** Most children, especially young ones, can be entertained very cheaply. Buy them an end roll of newspaper from your local paper and let their creativity run wild. Make a game out of ordinary stuff around the house, like tossing pennies into a jar, even. Realize that what your children want most of all is your time, not your stuff, and you'll find money in your pocket and joy in your heart.



Ways to Save on Transportation

- **Keep tires properly inflated.** It keeps you safe and costs less on gas. For every two PSI that all of your tires are below the recommended level, you lose 1% on your gas mileage. Most car tires are five to ten PSI below the normal level, so that means by just airing up your tires, you can improve your gas mileage by up to 5%.
- **Keep your car engine tuned** and its tires inflated to their proper pressure. Doing both can save you up to \$100 a year in gas.

- **Clean your car's air filter:** A clean air filter can improve your gas mileage by up to 7%, saving you more than \$100 for every 10,000 miles you drive in an average vehicle. Plus, cleaning your air filter is easy to do in just a few minutes – just follow the instructions in your automobile's manual and you're good to go.
- **Don't speed:** Not only is it inefficient in terms of gasoline usage, it also can get you pulled over and cost you a bundle, as I discovered a while back. It's highly cost-efficient to just drive the speed limit, keep that gas in the tank, and keep the cops off your tail.
- When driving, **avoid fast start-ups and stops.** Over time, you will save hundreds of dollars on lower gas and maintenance costs.
- **Get tires from Costco or other wholesale clubs.** Simply put, they cost a lot less than buying them at the dealer or even a chain tire store.
- **Shop around for gas.** Comparing prices at different stations and using the lowest-octane (recommended by the car owner's manual) can save you hundreds of dollars a year.
- **Drive a different route to work:** This is an especially powerful tip if you find yourself “automatically” stopping for something on the way into work or the way home. Get rid of that constant drain by selecting a different route that doesn't go by the temptation, even if the new route is a bit longer. You'll still be time ahead (because you're not stopping) and you'll definitely be money ahead.
- **Drive your car longer.** The buy new versus used debate often overlooks the most important factor—how long you own your car. Drive it as long as you safely can for substantial savings.
- **Go for reliability and fuel efficiency when buying a car:** A reliable and fuel efficient car will save you thousands over the long haul. Let's say you drive a vehicle for 80,000 miles. If you choose a 25 miles per gallon car over a 15 miles per gallon car, you save 2,133 gallons of gas. At \$3 a gallon, that's \$6,400 in savings right there. Reliability can pay the same dividends. Do the research – it will pay off for you. Also purchasing a vehicle that is manufactured and assembled in the US is cheaper to repair and maintain than a vehicle that is not.
- **When buying a car, go for late model used:** These are typically cars coming straight off of leases, meaning they were cared for by reliable owners. My truck was purchased with this criteria and has lasted me several years already with only one significant issue – and I saved a ton of money on the purchase price over buying new. Only now is it beginning to show significant signs of aging – and with the money I saved on that purchase, I was able to get out of debt that much quicker.
- **When buying a car, avoid gadgets:** Gadgets and electronics add complexity and weight to the vehicle. The more weight the less gas mileage and the more electronics, the more costly the fixes are.
- **Buy your car over the internet:** Search the internet for information on the car you want and then send e-mail requests to dealers for the best price. Even if the dealer is located in another state, the cost to have the car delivered may still be worth it. I paid \$500 to have a Honda Odyssey shipped 500 miles and still saved \$1,000 over the best local price available.



- **Carpool:** Is there anyone that lives near you who works at the same place (or near the same place) that you do? Why not ride together, alternating drivers each day? You can halve the wear and tear and gas costs for your car – and for your acquaintance as well.
- **Take public transportation:** If the city’s transit system is available near you, take it to work (or to play) instead of driving your car. It’s far cheaper and you don’t have to worry about parking your vehicle. In larger cities, an annual transit pass will often pay for itself after less than two months of use compared to using an automobile any use after 2 months is like riding for free. That’s money in the bank.
- **Take fewer cab rides:** Using public transit instead of cabs can save you \$5-10 per trip or more. If you’re a frequent cab user, the savings could completely fund your emergency savings account.
- **Check all airlines for cheap fares:** Since no website lists all discount carriers, also check out the websites of discount carriers like Southwest and Jet Blue, possibly saving you hundreds of dollars.
 - Remember too that if you travel Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and have at least 7 days before your return flight, the fares are usually lower than traveling on Friday, Saturday, Sunday or Monday and returning in less than 7 days. Also one way flights tend to be more expensive than round trip.



Health, Medical, Dental Potential Savings

It is a proven fact that the healthier we are, the less “health” expenses we have.

- **Get healthy:** Your health will directly impact the cost of life insurance and, in some cases, can reduce the cost of your health insurance.
- **Exercise more:** Go for a walk or a jog each evening, and practice stretching and some light muscle exercise at home. These exercises can be done at home for very little, meaning you’ve got an activity without a lot of cost, and the health benefits are enormous. Just set aside some time each day to get some exercise, and your body and wallet will thank you
- **Preventative Dental care:** It pays to practice preventative dental care, since a good cleaning routine helps prevent fillings, root canals, and dental crowns, which are expensive and no fun.
- **Keep your hands clean:** This one’s simple – just wash your hands thoroughly each time you use the bathroom or handle raw foods. You’ll keep yourself from acquiring all kinds of viruses and bacteria, saving you on medical bills and medicine costs and lost productivity. That’s not to say you shouldn’t explore the world and get your hands dirty sometimes – that’s good for you, too – but basic sanitation does help keep the medical bills away.
- **Generic Prescriptions:** Most of today’s health insurance policies have mandatory generic RX clauses. If yours does not ask your physician to consider prescribing generic drugs. Generic drugs can cost several hundred dollars less to purchase annually than brand-name drugs. However if you have an allergy to the generic drug’s binders, stabilizers and fillers, this not an option.
- **Buy generic or store brand over-the-counter medicines (OTC):** Generic and store brand OTC’s are usually exactly the same as their branded counterparts and cost less. Just read the label for the primary active ingredient and compare the generic or store brand to the name brand; they should be exactly the same. Then just look for acetaminophen instead of Tylenol, Ibuprophen instead of Advil or Motrin, naproxen instead of Aleve, diphenhydramine instead of Benedryl and so on. Storebrand and generic medications often cost 20-40 percent less than nationally advertised brands. The savings could easily exceed \$100 a year.
- **Price Compare your prescriptions:** Find the lowest-cost place to purchase prescription drugs. Make sure to check out not only your local pharmacist but also local supermarkets, area discount centers, and mail-order pharmacies.
- **Price Compare your OTC medications:** Find the place that consistantly costs the least.
- **Give up expensive habits,** like cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs: Those habits cause money to flow away from you with nothing in return. Call up your fortitude and work hard to kick the habits and you’ll find that money staying in your pocket instead of burning up and floating away.



Options for Saving on Groceries and Food

- Brown bag your lunch at least one more day a week:** Eating out at lunch is fun, so I wouldn't eliminate it completely. But taking lunch just one more day a week will keep money in your pocket. Lots of people think that this means "nasty lunch," but with some thoughtful preparation and just a few minutes of time, you can create something quite enjoyable for your brown bag lunch – and save a fistful of cash each day, too.
- Eat out at least one fewer time each month:** If it costs you \$25 to eat out, but only \$5 to eat in, then the \$20 you save each month allows you to almost completely fund a \$500 emergency savings account.
- Cut back on the convenience foods – fast foods, microwave meals, and so on.** Instead of eating fast food or just nuking some prepackaged food when you get home, try making some simple and healthy replacements that you can take with you. An hour's worth of preparation one weekend can give you a ton of cheap and handy meals that will end up saving you a lot of cash and not eat into your time when you're busy.
- Eat breakfast:** Eating a healthy breakfast fills you up with energy for the day and also decreases your desire to eat a big lunch in the middle of the day. Not only that, breakfast can be very healthy, quick, and inexpensive.
- Drink more water:** Not only does drinking plenty of water have great health benefits, water drinking has financial benefits, too. Drink a big glass of water before each meal, and not only will you digest it better, you won't eat as much, saving on the ol' food bill. You'll also find yourself feeling a bit better as you begin to get adequately hydrated (most Americans are perpetually somewhat dehydrated). Use Pur or Brita systems instead of bottled water.
- Eat less meat:** American's have the habit of having meat be 1/3 to 1/2 of the meal. Reduce this to 1/4 to 1/3 of the meal and fill the rest with vegetables, fruits and grains. For the nutritional value, meat is very expensive, especially as compared to vegetables and fruits. Simply change around your regular meal

proportions to include more fruits and vegetables and less meats – eat a smaller steak and a bigger helping of green beans, for example. Not only is this a healthier way to eat (saving on health costs), it's also less expensive.

- **Prepare more meals at home:** You'll find that cooking at home is much easier than you think – and way cheaper and healthier than take-out or dining out. Even better, you can easily prepare meals in advance – even handy fast food type meals.
- **Substitute coffee for expensive coffee drinks:** The \$2 a day you could well save by buying a coffee rather than a cappuccino or latte would allow you, over the course of a year, to completely fund a \$500 emergency fund.
- **Pack food before you go on a road trip:** Have everyone pack a sack lunch for the trip. That way, instead of stopping in the middle of the trip, driving around looking for a place to eat, spending a bunch of time there, and then paying a hefty bill, you can just eat on the road or, better yet, stop at a nice park and stretch for a bit. Plus, you'll save a lot of money and a fair amount of time this way.
- **Buy staples in bulk:** Bulk purchasing is often cheaper, however the larger quantities required pose several problems: Everything will expire at the same time and you may not be able to utilize all the item before expiration. Try arranging a monthly "shopping day" group in your neighborhood where you can plan to share the expense and product of your bulk purchasing with your neighbors. This way your purchase will NOT expire all at the same time.
- **Plan your meals around your grocery store's flyer:** Instead of just planning your meals based on a cookbook or whatever you can dream up, plan all your meals around what's on sale in your grocery store's flyer. Look at the biggest sales, then plan meals based on those ingredients and what you have on hand, and you'll find yourself with a much smaller food bill than you're used to
- **Try generic brands of items you buy regularly:** Instead of just picking up the ordinary brand of an item you buy, try out the store brand or generic version of the item. Likely, you'll save a few cents now, but you'll also likely discover that the store brand is just as good as the name brand – the only difference between the two, often, is the marketing. Once you're on board the generic train, you'll find your regular grocery bill getting smaller and smaller.
- **Only Purchase Produce In Season:** Each region of the country and areas in any given state, have a season when a particular fruit or vegetable is at its peak and hence cheaper. (See *U.S. Fruit & Vegetable In Season & Harvest Dates State by State* (Excel workbook, check all tabs) @ http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/u.s._fruit_vegetable_in_season_harvest_dates_state_by_state_wrd_97_new.xls and *Shopping for Fresh & Seasonal Foods* @ http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/shopping_for_fresh_seasonal_foods_new_site.pdf)
- **Shop Farmer's Markets for Fresh Produce:** Most farmer's market produce is cheaper than what is found in a supermarket. Many have organic and pesticide free produce too. Since farmer's markets only have produce that is in season, you benefit there too. To find a Farmer's Market near you see <http://www.LocalHarvest.org/>
- **Use a brutally effective coupon strategy:** Here's the trick: wait a month before using the coupons. Save your coupon flyer out of your Sunday paper for a month, then bust it out and start cutting anything that might be of interest. For a bonus kicker, use the coupons in comparison with your grocery store flyer that week to find out ways you can use a coupon to reduce the cost of an item already on sale – you can wind up paying pennies for some things and, on occasion, actually get food for free.
- **Get a crock pot:** A crock pot is perhaps the best deal on earth for reducing cooking costs in a busy family. You can just dump in your ingredients before work, put it on simmer, and dinner is done when you get home. There are countless recipes out there for all variety of foods, and every time you cook this way, you're saving money as compared to eating out
- **Make a quadruple batch of a casserole:** Casseroles are nice, easy dishes to prepare, but on busy nights, it's often still easier to just order some take-out or eat out or just plop a prepackaged meal in the

oven. Instead, the next time you make a casserole, make four batches of it and put the other three in the freezer. Then, the next time you need a quick meal for the family, grab one of those batches and just heat it up – easy as can be. Even better, doing this allows you to buy the ingredients in bulk, making each casserole cheaper than it would be ordinarily – and far, far cheaper than eating out or trying a prepackaged meal.

- **Shop for food with a list and stick to it:** People who do food shopping with a list, and buy little else, spend much less money than those who decide what to buy when they get to the food market. The annual savings could easily be hundreds of dollars.
- **Do a price comparison – and find a cheaper grocery store:** Most of us get in a routine of shopping at the same grocery store, even though quite often it's not the one that offers the best deals on our most common purchases. Fortunately, there's a simple way to find the cheapest store around. Just keep track of the twenty or so things you buy most often, then shop for these items at a variety of stores. Eventually, one store will come out on top for your purchases – just make that one your regular shopping destination and you'll automatically save money.

How to Save Money by Comparing Item Prices (per <http://www.TheSimpleDollar.com/>)

- Identify all of the grocery stores that you'd be willing to shop at
- Make a list of the twenty or thirty (or more) items you buy regularly
- Make a regular shopping trip to each of those stores
- Add up the prices to get your total for each store, then do your regular shopping at the store with the lowest total

(Printable Price Comparison Book page

http://organizedhome.com/sites/default/files/image/pdf/food_price_book.pdf)

For more grocery savings ideas see *The Great American Supermarket Games – Who Wins Who Loses?* @

http://formerlynurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/the_great_american_supermarket_games_-_who_wins_who_loses_new_site.pdf



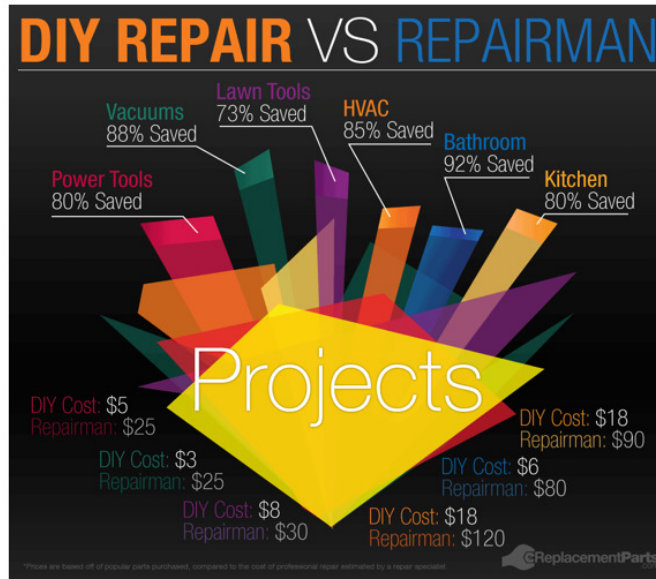
General Ways to Save Money While Shopping for Just About Anything

- **Never purchase expensive items on impulse.** Think over each expensive purchase for at least 24 hours. Acting on this principle will mean you have far fewer regrets about impulse purchases, and far more money for emergency savings.
- **Master the ten second rule:** Whenever you pick up an item in order to add it to your cart or to take it to the checkout, stop for ten seconds and ask yourself *why you're buying it and whether you actually need it or not*. If you can't find a good answer, put the item back. This keeps me from making impulse buys on a regular basis.
- **Master the thirty day rule:** Whenever you're considering making a potential unnecessary and expensive purchase, *wait thirty days and then ask yourself if you still want that item*. Quite often, you'll find that the urge to buy has passed and you'll have saved yourself some money by simply waiting. If you want, you can even keep a "thirty day list" where you write down the item and the day you'll

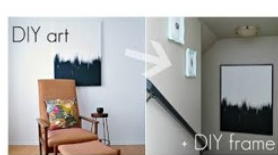
reconsider it, but I prefer just to keep this one in my head – that way, I often just forget about the unimportant things

- **Comparison shop to find the lowest prices** for necessary purchases — such as food and transportation and insurance. 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.
- **Write a list before you go shopping – and stick to it:** One should never go into a store without a strong idea of what one will be buying while in there. Make a careful plan of what you'll buy before you go, then stick strictly to that list when you go to the store. Don't put anything in the cart that's not on the list, no matter how tempting, and you'll come out of the store saving a bundle.
- **Sign up for every free customer rewards program you can:** Even if you rarely shop at that place, having a rewards card for that place will eventually net you some coupons and discounts. Here's the basic game plan for maximizing these programs:
 - create a non-personal-identification Gmail address just for these mailings (I often look up another city, state, zipcode and area code, as well as a fictional name)
 - collect every card you can, and then
 - check that account for extra coupons whenever you're ready to shop
- **Buy online when it saves you money:** Amazon and other similar major websites sell just about anything. Shop wisely as they are not always the cheapest or best product. *I personally do not trust the web with my financial data. Almost ALL sites track your spending habits via your credit/debit cards and that includes the web.*
- **Use "cash back" web sites:** eBates is a website that enables you to earn cash back on virtually all of your online purchases. And eBates is totally free. Swagbucks is a free site that enables you to earn cash back whenever you shop online. It's similar to Ebates, but you can also earn cash by watching videos, surfing the net, or taking surveys. **One security caveat:** *Some of these sites are NOT secure. Use a library web connection and a special non-personal email address for these orders. I personally do not trust the web with my financial data. Almost ALL sites track your spending habits via your credit/debit cards and that includes the web.*
- **Shop Used or Reconditioned** when shopping for standard items (clothes, sports equipment, older games, etc.) Quite often, you can find the exact item you want with a bit of clever shopping at used equipment stores, used game stores, consignment shops, and so on. Just make these shops a part of your normal routine – go there first when looking for potential items and you will save money. Try surplus and Goodwill, Salvation Army stores, many items can be found at these stores used, in great shape and at bargain prices. Plus you are helping people when you purchase from these stores.
- **Send away for and follow up on rebates.** After you buy a product with a rebate, send in the form that day. Then mark your calendar to remind yourself to follow up with the rebate company if the check hasn't show up.
- **Do holiday shopping right after the holidays:** Most people use this technique for Christmas, but it works for every holiday. Wait until about two days after a holiday, then go out shopping for items you need that are themed for that day. Get a Mother's Day card for next year the day after Mother's Day. Get Easter egg decorating kits the day after Easter. Get wrapping paper and cards and such the day after Christmas. The discounts are tremendous, and you can just put this stuff in the closet until next year, saving you a bundle.
- **Don't overspend on hygiene products:** For most people, inexpensive hygiene products do the trick – for example, buy whichever toothpaste is the cheapest, and the same goes with deodorant and the like. Better yet, make your own! The key is to use this stuff regularly and consistently – bathe daily, keep yourself clean, and you'll be just fine. No need to buy a \$40 facial scrub if you actually scrub your face properly.

- **Don't spend money just to de-stress:** Quite often, people will spend money just to wind down from a stressful day at work. Instead, it is more productive and less expensive to go home and taking some quiet time just to stretch and spaz. Instead of spending to de-stress, try some basic meditation techniques, stretching, or yoga and see how you feel.
- **Check out Yard & Garage Sales:** I have found so many things, some in perfect condition and really cheap at these. Tents for \$5-10, a 7 foot trellis for \$5, a push mower for \$20 and the like. Sometimes you can find really good furniture and stuff at "estate" sales. When you live in an urban area, these estate sales are often the possessions of people who have passed and have no heirs, so the state sells the items.



Sew It!
Make It!



Doing/Making It Yourself, Repair, Mend, Repurpose, Reuse to save

- **Challenge yourself to try making your own things:** Simple household items like Borax, Vinegar, pure soap and the like can make dishwasher and dish detergent, laundry soap, bar soap, liquid soap, window and glass cleaners, floor cleaners and even antibacterial soap, etc. Baking your own bread, rolls and buns with today's machines are a piece of cake. When cooking a meal, make up freezable plates to use on those hectic work week nights. Darn socks, patch the elbows on shirts and knees on work pants, sew a skirt, knit or crochet a blanket or sweater and so on.

- **Cut your own hair:** Just put a garbage bag over the bathroom sink, bust out the clippers and scissors, and get it done. Two or three cuts will pay for the clippers, and then you're basically getting free haircuts. With a bit of practice, you can make it look good, too. Granted some people just shouldn't come near hair with a pair of scissors or a clipper, but most of us can do the basic trim and only pay to have our hair styled while cut every 2-3 months or so.
- **Make your own beer or wine:** If you enjoy an occasional drink, this is a great way to enjoy some of the beverages that you love at a very cheap price. You can easily make five gallons of beer or wine at once and it doesn't take that long, either, once you have the basic ingredients. Even better, it's a great activity to do with friends – you buy the equipment, they bring the juice and you both get a few bottles of delicious homemade wine out of the deal. A nice entertainment, plus some free beverages – that's a great frugal deal.
- **Repair, Fix, Mend it:** If something's broken, give a fair shot at repairing it yourself before replacing it or calling a repairman. Get a handyman's book or advice from the internet and give it a shot yourself. I've fixed clocks, air conditioners, and VCRs by doing this before, saving significant cash by saving on a replacement or on a repair person.
- **Utilize Yard Sales:** Although you have to be careful purchasing from a yard or garage sale, they are still great places to find all kinds of things.
- **Repurpose it:** If a shoe is dead, don't throw it out, it can make an interesting and different planter. Same with purses, old suit cases, duffel or gym bags and the like. Got an old tire, don't take it the dump, makes a great yard planter or several can be a child's obstacle course.
- **Break the "use and toss" habit:** Instead of purchasing Swifter dust rags and floor dusters, make your own reusable ones and wash when dirty. Use cloth napkins and dish towels. Get some cheap plates to use daily or outside and wash them. Save clothing that is beyond repair in a scrap bag; this can be used for quilt squares or rag rugs or just plain grease rags. Get a mop that has a washable mop head, along with a broom and dust pan. The savings at the end of the year will be considerable. Plus you won't be adding to the landfill, so if your garbage collection fee is based on weight, you have a double money saving win.
- **Recycle:** Some places still offer cash back on recyclable deposits. Shop around your area for the best deals. Even if there is no cash back, you can reduce landfill use by recycling, which should keep your trash disposal fees less volatile.

For more tips on repurposing and such see *Frugality - A Homesteading Preppers Way*
http://formerlymurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/frugality-a_homesteading_preppers_way_new_site.pdf



Miscellaneous Saving Options

- **Start a garden:** Gardening is an inexpensive hobby if you have a yard. Just rent a tiller, till up a patch, plant some plants, keep it weeded, and you'll have a very inexpensive hobby that produces a huge amount of vegetables for you to eat at the end of the season. Look into edible landscaping and fruit trees or shrubs that are indigenous to your area.
- **Turn a critical eye to your "collections":** Most people collect something – what do you collect? Is it something that consistently brings you joy or is of intrinsic or sentimental value? Or is it something that you just do out of habit at this point? Does the collection itself have value? Could you perhaps "trim the fat" from this collection by getting rid of duplicates or getting rid of the items you no longer use? Also, could you perhaps cut down on your spending on that hobby? Focus on trimming the things you don't feel strongly about.
- **Use a simple razor to shave:** Despite all the claims about all the various disposable and electric razors, the fact is the good old fashioned safety razor still offers just as effective a shave as the fancy disposables or expensive electric ones do. Not only that but most shaving cream is unnecessary too. If your skin is warm and clean everyday bar soap or body wash can be just as effective a "shaving cream" as the expensive creams. Try shaving in the shower after you have washed but haven't rinsed yet. You can dry that safety razor out and it will be good for the next day. Swap out the blades every few weeks. **Bottom Line:** Use a simple razor – not an expensive electric one that stops working in three years or disposable that is tossed every few days – and shave your face, arm pits or legs when they're wet. You can get a very good shave with some practice and save a lot of money over the long haul. To review the savings see *Safety Razor vs. Cartridge Razor – Shave like a Grownup* @ <http://www.razorsbarbershop.com/shave-like-a-grownup/>
- **Always ask for fees to be waived:** Any time you sign up for a service of any kind and there are sign-up fees, ask for them to be waived. Sometimes (but not always), they will be and you save money just by being forthright about not wanting to pay excessive fees.
- **Learn to Barter and Trade rather than purchase.** This can save you tons of money.

For more bartering tips see the following:

How Bartering Works <http://money.howstuffworks.com/bartering.htm>

How To Barter, 4 easy ways to trade <http://www.livingwellspendingless.com/2012/10/25/how-to-barter/>

Bartering Checklist-I'll Trade Ya <http://www.playbillsvspayingbills.com/paying-bills/ill-trade-ya/>

Bartering for Survival <http://prepforshtf.com/bartering-for-survival/#.VLxXsi69idM>

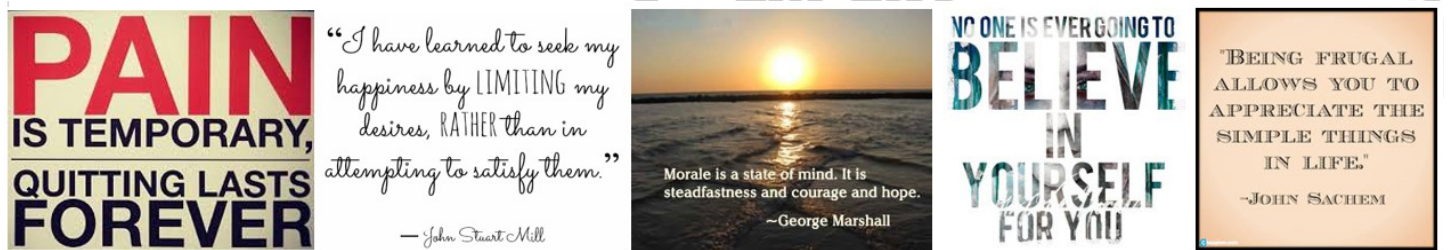
Bartering and the IRS

http://formerlynurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/bartering_and_the_irs_new_site.pdf



Attitude & Morale

For some bizarre reason it is now unfashionable to be frugal. People who are thrifty are called “penny pinchers” and “tightwads”. I just don’t understand it. I not only have a few really wealthy friends who shop second hand and consignment stores, I have also met a good baker’s dozen of wealthy shoppers in those same stores over the years. Being frugal or money wise is NOT being a tightwad – it’s being SMART!



When I talk with people on why they shop at high end department or specialty stores, their reasons all boil down to the “brand tag” on their clothing tells others that “they have made it”, or “see how successful I am”. Oh granted this isn’t what they actually say. Usually it’s “you get what you pay for” and when I point out that I found this brand name, used, at a consignment store, I usually get “I don’t have time to look around.” Go figure.

I blame the runaway marketing and advertising used to sell, sell, sell for these attitudes. Stop and think about it - **Success is being able to provide for yourself and your loved ones without going into debt or hurting or depriving someone else.** Success is NOT dependent on money!



So to me the first step to keeping up one’s morale up while getting and staying out debt, plus saving some bucks, is to ignore all the advertisements and just be myself while becoming as self-reliant and independent of outside entities as I can. Pooy on those name-callers with their noses in the air!

- **Riches can only come from within, money can’t buy them.**
- **Talk to your loved ones about what your dreams are:** This seems like an odd way to save money, but think about it. If you spend time with the people you love the most and come to some consensus about your dreams, it becomes easy for you all to plan for it. If you’re all planning and working together towards this dream, it becomes easier to stay focused on it and reach it. Set a big,

audacious goal together and encourage each other to be financially fit – soon, you'll find you're doing it naturally and your dreams are coming closer than ever.

- **Ask for help and encouragement from your inner circle:** Sit down and talk to the people you love and care about the most and ask them for help. Tell them that you're trying to trim your spending and you'd love it if they offered any suggestions and support they might have – and pay attention to what they tell you. They might have some personal insights for your situation that will really help.
- **Don't beat yourself up when you make a mistake:** Even if you make ten good choices, it's easy to beat yourself up and feel like a failure over one bad choice. If you make a big mistake and realize it, think about why you realized it now instead of then, and try to apply that later on. The memory of that mistake can end up being very valuable, indeed.
- **Find daily inspiration for making intelligent moves:** Perhaps you're inspired to make changes by your spouse, your children, brother/sister or even by someone in the community you respect. Maybe it's just a personal goal, like an early retirement. Find something that makes you want to make positive changes, then use that person or thing as a constant reminder. Keep a picture of it in your wallet, in your vehicle, and on your bathroom mirror. Keep it in your mind as much as you possibly can.
- **Create a visual reminder of your debt:** Basically, just make a giant progress bar that starts with the amount of debt you have and ends with zero or for savings, starts at zero and ends with your savings goal amount. Each time you pay down a little bit or add to savings, fill in a little more of that progress bar. Keep this reminder in a place where you'll see it often, and keep filling it in regularly. It keeps your eyes on the prize and leads you straight to debt freedom or savings goal.
- **Keep an idea notebook in your pocket:** I've wasted countless amounts of time and money simply because I've forgotten things in my head. Instead of relying on my memory, I keep a small notebook with me to jot down ideas and things I need to remember, then I check it regularly throughout the day. This keeps me from forgetting to pick up milk and having to backtrack ten miles, for starters.
 - **A counterpart to this is a price comparison notebook.** Whenever I am out and about and see something that I want or need and am budgeting for I write the date, store, item and price in my notebook.
- **Join up with a volunteer program:** It's a great way to meet new people, get some exercise, and involve yourself in a positive project that can lift your spirit. It also comes without a cost to you and can provide a lot of entertainment and a fulfilling day when you're in the right mindset. I've come to spend more and more of my time volunteering, serving on various committees and groups in the community – and it's the best thing I've ever done.
- **Watch your savings grow:** Check your progress every month. Not only will this help you stick to your personal savings plan, but it also helps you identify and fix problems quickly. With these simple ways to save money, it may even inspire you to save more and hit your goals faster.
- **Never Ever Give Up:** Whenever the struggle against debt feels like it's too much, go read a personal finance blog and remember that there are a lot of people out there fighting the same fight.

