

Budget Saving Tips Worksheet

Auditing your spending could save you \$50 per month or more. Review this checklist. Are there opportunities here you haven't considered before?

Food – Groceries

- Shop at the large grocery stores and avoid the local convenience store.
- Don't shop for food when hungry.
- Make a list of things you need to prepare weekly meals and stick to your list.
- Shop once a week. The more you shop, the more you'll spend on impulse purchases.
- Use coupons on items you would purchase anyway.
- Bring only the cash you'll need for your list.

Dining Out

- Eat at home or pack a lunch when possible.
- Don't buy coffee at store/ coffee house. Bring a thermos instead.
- Form a dinner club with friends or relatives for dining at home.
- If you dine out, pay with cash.

Clothing

- Plan your purchases. Don't shop on impulse.
- Buy clothing three times per year:
 - o After Christmas
 - o After Easter
 - o After July 4th
- Don't confuse shopping with fun.
- Buy only those items which you can mix and match with other things in your wardrobe.

Auto Expenses

- Evaluate if you really need a car.
- Use public transportation when possible.
- Shop for best gas prices.
- When running errands, combine trips.
- Keep your tires inflated properly.
- Shop around for repair estimates.
- Review insurance services and fees.

Entertainment

- Try matinee movies or the library.

Household Expenses

- Set your thermostat to 68 degrees or lower in winter. Lower it to 58-60 degrees at night or when no one is home.
- Caulk window and door frames to prevent drafts. Consider a clear plastic sheet (available at hardware stores) if drafts are extreme.
- Run the dishwasher, clothes washer, and clothes dryer only with full loads.
- Consider hand washing dishes.
- Air dry clothes if space is available.
- Turn the lights and the TV off when you leave the room.
- Use low-wattage bulbs.

Phone, Cable and Internet

- Review if you need both a land line and a cell phone.
- Match plan limits with actual usage (not too high or low).
- Eliminate unused or little used options.
- Review if you need cable TV:
 - o Internet option for programs
 - o Eliminate pay channels not used often
- Review if you need internet:
- Is free public Wi-Fi available?
- Public computers in libraries.
- Phone-data duplicate coverage.

Financial Services

- Pay your credit card balance in full each month.
- Avoid late fees.
- Reduce debt and interest charges.
- Payoff/ pay down debt
- Refinance at lower rates
- Avoid ATM surcharges.
- Avoid banking surcharges (check printing, on-line access, etc.).
- Review credit union options.

Use the backside of this sheet to write down your other ideas. Remember, even \$3 to \$5 in savings per category can make a big difference over time.