

Budgeting Tips



No matter how much or how little money you have, it is important to have good money management skills. A budget is the best tool in getting control over your finances.

A budget is a list of your income and expenses over a period of time. But more importantly, a budget is a financial tool that helps you meet goals. A successful budget requires some tough decisions and cooperation from the whole family.

Following are four steps to help you start or improve your budget.

1. Know what your goals are:

Goals help give you a purpose for budgeting. Maybe you want to:

- Save for a home
- Buy a new car
- Pay off debts
- Have more spending money

2. Know where the money goes:

Until you know where your money goes, you cannot create a spending plan. Carry a notepad with you and write down all of your spending habits for a month.

- Don't forget small purchases like candy bars, a can of pop or coffee
- Remember expenses that do not occur monthly such as quarterly insurance payments
- Start looking at how you are spending your money and thinking about cuts you may be able to make

3. Look for ways to save:

If your expenses are more than your income, look for ways to save.

- *Groceries*- buy store or generic brands, shop from a list and look at discount or bulk stores
- *Utilities*- unplug items not in use, shop for lower prices
- *Cell phones and land lines*- discontinue or reduce services
- *Cable & Satellite*- cut back on channels or discontinue service
- *Banking & Credit Unions*- avoid paying unnecessary fees by avoiding foreign ATMs and preventing overdraft charges

4. Develop your budget:

Find a budget style that works for you. What good is all of the information you have gathered if you do not put it to use? You may budget by using:

Notebooks- track your money and your bills in a notebook

Pre-printed budgets- many budget forms can be found online, or contact the Consumer Affairs for sample forms

Calendars-track your income and expenses on the appropriate days

Calendar Style

Month						
1 Rent	2	3	4	5	6 Pay	7
8 Food	9	10 Car	11	12	13 Loan	14
15 Phone	16	17	18 Cable	19	20 Pay	21
22	23	24 Gas	25	26	27	28

TIPS FOR SAVING (see over)

For more information on consumer issues contact or visit:



Office of Consumer Affairs
175 S Main St, Suite 209
Akron, OH 44308
(330) 643-2879

www.co.summit.oh.us/conaffairs.htm



Tips for Saving



Go Green

- Turn down the thermostat
- Turn off lights and unplug all electronics not in use
- Use energy efficient light bulbs
- Use re-usable water containers
- Wash laundry in cold water and line dry

Groceries

- Create menus based on weekly sale items
- Do not shop on an empty stomach
- Know your grocery budget and shop with a calculator
- Shop discount or bulk stores
- Shop from a list

Insurance

- Bundling all insurance with one company may lower the rates
- Eliminate unnecessary fees
- Evaluate insurance plans once a year
- Raising deductibles may lower your premium
- Shop for the best rates

Telephone Service

- Consider switching to a prepaid cell phone plan
- Evaluate your phone plans at least once a year
- Look at possibly eliminating either landline or cell phone
- Reduce additional cell phone features such as game or ringtone downloads
- Review your monthly bill for errors or unauthorized charges

Utilities

- Look into payment plans
- Reduce drafts by using weather stripping or caulking windows and doors
- Repair leaky faucets and toilets to reduce water usage
- Shop around for the best rates
- Use washer and dryer during off peak hours when electricity costs less