



Going Green: How to Keep More \$\$ in Your Pocket

There are basically two ways to do this—buy less or pay less. Here are several steps you can take to cut your monthly expenses

The Big Picture. First, find out where your money is going. Carry a small notebook and write down every purchase you make (from a 99 cent soda to rent) for thirty days. Then break down the purchases into groups, such as fast food, snacks, gasoline, rent/mortgage, utilities, vehicle expenses, insurance, etc. Are you surprised? Many people never realize how much they spend in a month's time.

A New Mindset. The next step is often the hardest but most crucial in saving money. It's a change in attitude—**to make an honest distinction between your needs and wants.** Often you hear people say, "I *have* to have that pair of shoes" or "I *need* 200 channels on my TV." Indeed, shoes are needed to protect your feet; perhaps you don't need 20 pairs when 5 will do. And if you don't have 200 channels, will your survival truly be at risk?

A "need" is something you must have to stay alive and a "want" is to make it more comfortable. A need to eat, a want to eat at an expensive restaurant. A "want" is an area in which you can cut.

With this in mind, take your list of expenses (from above) and using the chart to the right, divide them into two categories: **Need and Want.**

Under "**Need**" check each expense that you must incur- rent, insurance, utilities- things you need to function. Check each expense that "make life more comfortable" under "**Want**". Now, take a look at the dollar amount you spend under "**Want**" and think of ways to cut back by buying less or paying less. Maybe you can cook at home instead of eating out or down-size your cable or phone plans.

Continued

| Monthly Expenses | Amount | Need | Want |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Food | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| For Home | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Eating Out | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Snacks | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rent/Mortgage | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Utilities | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Home Phone | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Basic | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Long Distance | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cell Phone | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Basic | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Add-ons | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cable/Satellite TV | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Electricity/Gas | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Water/Garbage | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transportation | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vehicle payments | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gas | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Insurance | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vehicle | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Personal Care | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Basic (toothpaste, shampoo) | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Extra (manicures, high-end product) | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Entertainment | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Movies, video games, downloads | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clothing | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Basic | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Extra | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Miscellaneous Expenses | | | |
| Total Expenses | Total Expenses | Total Amt Spent | Total Amt Spent |
| | | | |

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Saving Tips

Gas Prices A recent Gallup poll reports that gas prices have already caused 47% of adults financial hardships. The extra \$8 or \$10 per fill-up has to come from somewhere else in your budget. So what can you do?



Combine trips and carpool. Coordinate errands, grocery shopping and other trips with your neighbors and family, then alternate driving.

Don't be brand conscious. Many experts agree that **the only difference between brands of gas is the additives.** Brands fill their tanker trucks at whatever refinery is closest and the only difference is a few gallons of proprietary additive that gets mixed in. Going generic could keep \$100's more in your pocket a year. (wikihow.com)

Park in the shade. Gasoline actually evaporates right out of your tank and it does so faster in the sun. Park in the shade or face your gas tank away from the sun. (greencars.com)

Consider your car. A poorly tuned car can use 25% more gas. Check your tire pressure weekly. If your tires are underinflated, you'll use 30% more gas. (opentravelinfo.com)

Groceries When it comes to budgeting, **food is the one area where most of us can achieve the most savings,** if we know how. The typical family spends

15% of their income on food. Think about this: every time a food company or restaurant takes a food, cuts it, cooks it and packages it, you pay for all

those steps. The new trend is for families to stay home and eat cooked meals. The skill is in purchasing menu items as economically as possible and having them on hand when you need them.

Plan ahead. Know what's in your pantry. Taking inventory before you go shopping helps you avoid purchasing duplicates. It also helps with menu planning-you can cook with ingredients you already have.

Plan your shopping trip. The more "quick trips" to the store you make, the more you

will spend. If you go to the store for one item you are more likely to come out with three and you'll be less likely to get the items at the best price. Without a planned list you are more prone to forget items.

* Plan a menu for two weeks and create a shopping list for it. Choose recipes that have common ingredients; angel-hair noodles for spaghetti on Monday and chicken tetrazzini on Thursday.

Hint

Don't fall for the "3 for \$4.99". You may only save 15 cents per item and not even need all of them.

* Watch the circulars on Wednesdays and Sundays and determine who has the best deals. Retailers usually match exact items, so take the ad with you.

* **Another option is to plan your menu around the bargains, especially when cooking with meat.**

Take advantage of good deals- When you come across a good deal, stock up if your budget and space allow. This works well on regular necessities such as paper towels and toilet paper. Buy family packs of meat, divide and prepare what is needed then freeze remaining meat in packages appropriate for your family. For example, if you are a family of two and you buy a six-pack of chicken, prepare two pieces and package remaining chicken in three packs of two, then freeze. This way, you only thaw what is needed thus avoiding waste.

Think "food" not "grocery". Go back and look at the expenses you listed in your notebook. Highlight all the "food" entries - fast-food, sodas at the gas station, snacks at the vending machine, restaurants and groceries. Are you amazed at how this adds up?

You can make this amount go down simply by making a few changes. Fill up a mug at home and take it with you. Instead of buying prepackaged snack items, buy large bags and place serving-size portions into sandwich bags for quick access.

Utility Costs Saving energy helps you mind the green in your pocket, as well as the green surrounding you.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative provides a list of 101 low cost/no cost energy-saving measures. Below are a few of them.

1. **Water heater:** Set water heater temperature no higher than 120°F and install wraps per manufacturer's instructions. Each year drain 1-2 gallons from bottom of water heater to reduce sediment build-up.

2. **Laundry:** Wash and dry only when load is full. Dry consecutive loads to harvest heat remaining in dryer from last load. Verify that the dryer vent hose is not kinked or clogged and that it is tightly connected to dryer and inside wall fitting. Also, check that the dryer exhaust door closes when dryer is off. Try using a "solar-powered" clothes dryer-a clothes line.

3. **Weatherizing.** Air that transfers in and out of homes through cracks, crevices and holes can increase energy consumption. Seal around pipes coming through walls. Place weather-stripping around doors and single-pane windows. Drop-down stairways into the attic should fit tightly into the ceiling and be weather-stripped.



U.S. Department of Energy
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Weatherization Assistance Program

The Weatherization Assistance Program enables low-income families to permanently reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient. The WAP for Alabama is administered by the AL Dept of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), who sets eligibility requirements. To apply, call the Community Service Dept. at 334-242-5365 or visit :

www.apps1.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/

Does cooking at home really beat the \$1 menus?

You can purchase a double cheeseburger at a popular fast-food restaurant for about \$1.25. So, does cooking a hamburger at home beat that? Let's do the math:

3 lbs of hamburger @ \$1.99/lb = \$5.97

16 slices of cheese, store brand = \$1.99

16 hamburger buns = \$3.98

1 small bottle of ketchup and mustard = \$3.00

Total of \$14.94 for 16 homemade hamburgers. Total of \$20.00 for 16 fast-food hamburgers.

Source: thesimpledollar.com