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Saving Your Money

“I’d like to save, but there’s never any money left at the end of the month!”

Just about all of us have felt this way about saving money. Saving money simply means *putting money aside*. When we think about where we spend our money, many of us probably could find a few extra dollars here and there that could be put toward a future goal.

What are your goals?

Strong money goals say:

- **What** you want,
- **When** you want it,
- **How much** you need, and
- They are **written down**.

Research by the Consumer Federation of America suggests people are twice as likely to be successful savers if they have a specific money goal. Putting money aside may mean making changes to your current money habits and coming up with new habits. Here are some ideas to help you get started.

Pay Yourself First

What if you set money aside at the start of the month instead of waiting to see if there’s any left at the end? If you wait until the end of the month to set money aside, it seems like other expenses always come up and then there’s no money left.

If you save at the beginning of the month and an unexpected bill does pop up during the month, you can use the savings you set aside earlier. Plus, you save even more money by not having to use a credit card or take out a loan and pay extra in interest.

What are some other ways to pay yourself?

Make installment payments – An installment loan is where you make the same payment month after month, like a car loan. Once you make that last payment on your installment loan, celebrate! - and then keep making the monthly payment to yourself by putting that same amount of money into your savings.

Make it automatic – You can have money taken out of your paycheck or checking account each month and get it direct deposited into a savings account. Most banks and credit unions will let you automatically transfer money into a savings account for free.



Ideas to Jumpstart Your Savings

Break a habit – Do you eat out three times a week? How about cutting down to two times a week and putting the cost of the third meal into savings? If you cut out one \$8 fast food meal each week for a whole year, you could save \$416 by the end of the year!

Breaking a habit can be easier said than done. Try starting with a small habit that you don't think you would miss too much just to see how it goes. Even small changes really add up over time!

Find little ways to save – Instead of paying to see movies, check them out from the library for free. Grow a garden—it's fun and provides food for the family too. In the spring or fall, watch for sales on winter coats and boots and stock up for the next year. Shop resale stores and garage sales. Board games, local parks and walks in the neighborhood are fun and easy on the budget.

Save windfall income – If you get money from gifts, overtime, or tax returns, could it go into savings? If you were getting by okay before you got the extra money, odds are you won't even miss it if you set some aside. Or you could try the 80-10-10 Rule: use 80% for bills, put 10% in savings, and use 10% on whatever you'd like.

Keep an eye on your goal – Write or tape a picture of what you're saving for on your jar or

piggy bank.

Take charge of your change – At the end of the day, empty your change into your piggy bank or a large jar. If you save 25 cents a day for an entire year, do you know you'll have almost \$100 set aside?

Play the savings game – Pick one thing you buy and come up with ideas on how you could:

- Buy it cheaper
- Make it last longer
- Use it less

For example, pick a food you eat regularly. Have your family "taste test" with a cheaper brand to see if they notice much difference. If you like a more expensive brand, can you buy it a little less often?

Set a Goal, Pick an Idea, Get Started!

Which savings idea would you be willing to try? Pick one or two tips, and try them out until they become a regular savings routine for you.

It can take a little while to get into a new habit. Once you get started, it becomes much easier—and it feels good. You may have so much fun reaching your first goal that you set up a second savings goal before you know it!

For More Information...

Visit our website for more financial education resources.

finances.extension.wisc.edu/

Contact your local Extension Educator:

counties.extension.wisc.edu/

For help with balancing your monthly spending plan, contact the nonprofit National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) at www.nfcc.org/ or 800.388.2227.

To \$um It Up:

\$ What amount of savings in the bank would help you sleep better at night?

\$ Getting into the habit of putting money aside is more important than the amount you set aside.

\$ People are more likely to be successful at savings if they have a goal with a dollar amount and a date.

\$ Pick a goal that excites you the most and get started!

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