

How to Save Money: 23 Easy Ways To Start Saving Today

By Candice Elliott

If you're looking at how to save money, you'll find plenty of listicles that have dozens of money-saving tips, but some of them are silly, things like "Wash and reuse your tinfoil. Make your own laundry detergent."

Not only are those things time consuming, but the amount of money they save you is negligible. When you're looking to learn how to save money, you probably aren't looking for a hobby; you're in some financial distress.

You need to save some real money and fast. Maybe you have a lot of credit card debt, are drowning in student loans, or have recently been impacted by a significant, unexpected expense and finally understand why people in the personal finance realm are always banging on about the importance of having an emergency fund.

But saving money is not exactly fun while spending money is. So we don't want to give you a lot of money-saving tips that will make you feel as though you're being deprived or experiencing the dreaded FOMO (fear of missing out).

We also don't want to make learning how to save money too complicated because you're unlikely to stick to your savings goals. We want to provide you with simple ways to save money that will stick.

Here are 23 ways to start saving today.

Create a Budget, Track, and Automate

There is no way around it. If you want to learn how to save money, you must have a budget. A budget is how you track your spending, so you know exactly where your money is going and where you're overspending.

1. Budget

Budgeting programs like Mint, You Need a Budget (YNAB), and Personal Capital make it easier than ever. Personal Capital is free and helps you optimize your investments.

Mint is free to use and does much of the work creating the budget for you.

YNAB is a paid program and has a bit of a learning curve, but it's better than Mint for anyone whose income varies from month to month. YNAB is set up, so you live on the money you made last month this month.

2. Track

A monthly budget shows you where your money is going. Sure, you know how much your monthly housing payment and cell phone bill are, but you are probably spending a lot of money in variable categories like food and entertainment.

Your budget tracks your spending so you can see where your spending leaks are and fix them.

3. Automate

Have you ever been hit with a late fee because you forgot to pay a bill? Not because you didn't have the money, but because you just forgot? Automate as many bill payments as possible. If the vendor doesn't allow it, you can set it up from your bank.

Either way, the money comes directly from your checking account on the date you choose. You don't have to remember to pay a bill or find the time to sit down and do it.

Adopt Smart Spending Strategies

Part of learning how to save money is learning how to spend money. We do not advocate living a miserly life full of ramen and devoid of socializing.

You work hard for your money, and you deserve to use some of it for fun things. And you can when you adopt some smart spending strategies.

4. What is the 30-Day Rule?

Have you ever heard of the Stanford marshmallow experiment?

The Stanford marshmallow experiment was a study on delayed gratification. A child was offered a choice between one small but immediate reward, or two small rewards if they waited for a period of time. In follow-up studies, the researchers found that children who were able to wait longer for the preferred rewards tended to have better life outcomes, as measured by SAT scores, educational attainment, BMI, and other life measures.

The 30-day rule is an exercise in delayed gratification, an excellent strategy to curb impulse spending.

Here's how it works, if you want to buy something that isn't a necessity, you write it down and wait 30 days. If, after 30 days, you still want that thing, you can buy it.

You'll find that the vast majority of the time, you won't even remember why you wanted that thing in the first place.

5. The Refrigerator Method

Tape your budget to the fridge. It has helped us cut our spending by 30%. Yes, 30%.

Maybe it's working so well because we have to look at it every day or maybe it's the task of physically writing down how much we spent that helped us but whatever it is, it's working.

If you want to try it out, go grab a piece of paper and start by writing down your top spending categories. Leave space in between each so you can list your purchases underneath each category.

Here are ours:

- Groceries
- Restaurants and Take Out (includes coffee shops, lunch)
- Household/Personal Care Items (cleaners, razors, garbage bags, etc)
- Shopping (gifts, clothes, electronics, books, other toys)
- Miscellaneous (Uber)

Next, decide how much you will spend in each category. Be realistic with your numbers. If you blow your budget in a couple of days you'll become discouraged.

Now all you have to do is write down everything you spend in the appropriate categories. Simple as that.

One more rule. If you do go over budget in a category, it gets deducted from the next week's budget. So, let's say your eating out budget is \$100 and you have dinner with your college friends plus a birthday brunch for your sister in one week and you end up spending \$135 on eating out. That -\$35 get rolled over to next week so you will only have \$65 to spend.

Easy Ways to Save Money Daily

Small, daily decisions can lead to significant savings.

6. Buy the Store Brand

Don't automatically reach for the name brand, whether you're buying OTC drugs, personal care products, or grocery store items. There's usually little or no difference between a store brand product and a brand-name one.

7. Don't Buy Drinks

Don't buy things like water, coffee, tea, and soda.

You can still have those things but bring them from home. Get a reusable water bottle and a travel mug and fill them up before you leave home.

If you drink sodas at work, buy a case and leave them at your office rather than buying them from the vending machine

8. Bring Your Lunch

I know you see this one on every single "How to Save Money" list, but it's because people spend so much money buying lunch at work. If you don't believe me, go through the past month of your spending transactions and total up how much you spent on this category.

If you don't like to cook, buy a bunch of frozen dinners when they go on sale and leave them at work.

9. Drive Less

For one week, write down all of the trips you take in your car or truck. Go through the list and see which trips you can cut. Maybe you can combine some of your errands into a single trip rather than multiple ones.

Could you have walked, biked, or taken public transportation for any of those trips? Unless you live in a very rural area, the answer is almost certainly "Yes."

I don't have a car, so I do all of my errands on foot. And I'm still alive to tell the tale!

Every trip you don't take your car for is less money spent on gas.

10. Consider Online Shopping

I know you probably already do at least some online shopping, but how could you do it in a way that would save you money?

For things you regularly buy like cleaning supplies, personal care items, or paper products (tissues, paper towels, toilet paper), order them through Amazon's Subscribe and Save program.

The items will come on a regular schedule of your choosing, and you get a discount for setting up a standing order.

If there are items, you can't find nearby and are driving out of your way for, see if you can order those online. You'll save on gas and time. Use a Cash Back Credit Card

11. When you're buying store brands and online shopping, pay for those purchases with a good cash back credit card. These cards give you a percentage of cashback on each purchase.

Some give a higher percentage back on specific categories, some rotate the categories quarterly, and some give the same percentage back on all purchases.

Just be sure to choose a card with no annual fee and don't buy things you can't afford. All of the "how to save money" tips in the world are nothing in the face of mounting credit card debt.

Easy Ways to Save \$1,000 a Month

See, saving money daily wasn't hard. And these monthly money-saving tips are just as easy and can save you \$1,000 a month, maybe more. Your retirement account is going to love these tips.

12. Join Your Local Library

If you think libraries only offer books, you are missing out! What is provided varies by the library, but these are just a few of the things some libraries offer:

- Passes to museums and other local attractions
- Resume help
- Storytime for kids
- Audiobooks
- Guest speakers
- Tutoring and homework help
- Board games

Libraries are a treasure trove of free entertainment, see what your's has to offer.

13. Shop With a List

Shopping with a list is another standard money-saving tip, but I don't just mean grocery shopping. Most of us already do that, especially if you meal plan.

I mean, use a shopping list every time you shop because if you don't, you're more susceptible to the Target Effect. The result of going into a store, intending to buy a few things, and leaving with much more. It frequently happens while shopping at Target.

In fact, the Target Effect is so strong; I want you to go a step further than just making a list before you do any shopping. Leave your debit card and credit cards at home.

Estimate how much your list costs, take out that much cash (\$20 extra to be safe), and only take that cash to the store.

14. Pay Yourself First

PYF is right up there with having a budget when it comes to achieving your financial goals, impossible to do without it. To PYF, set up a direct deposit from your paycheck directly into your savings account.

Most companies will allow you to deposit money into more than one account, so provide HR with your savings account information and ask that a portion of each paycheck go there. If you can't do that, just set up an automatic transfer from your checking account into your savings account (or investment account) every payday.

How much? The rule of thumb is to save 20% of your income. If you have debt or not much extra cash left over when you pay all of your necessary expenses, start smaller.

Even if it's just \$10 per paycheck, it's something and gets you into the habit of saving money. It should hurt a little. \$1 per paycheck is not enough to make a difference. Nearly all of us spend on non-essentials that we could cut for the sake of our future selves.

15. Cut Cable

If you're under 30, you probably think everyone has cut the cord and doesn't pay a cable bill anymore. Not so.

According to estimates, about 33 million consumers will have cut the cord by the end of this year, rising to 50 million in 2021 and 55 million in 2022. The percentage of adults no longer paying for cable or satellite TV will jump from 13% this year to 21% in 2022, the firm estimated.

The average cable bill is over \$100 a month! If you still have cable, how many of the dozens of channels do you watch? Probably just a handful.

You can find those channels on streaming services like Hulu and YouTube TV, most of which are less than half the price of cable per month.

16. Change Your Light Bulbs

Replace your current light bulbs as they burn out with LED bulbs. Yes, LEDs are slightly more expensive, but they are energy efficient and last 25,000 hours compared to 1,200 hours for an incandescent bulb.

To highlight just how much longer LEDs last than incandescents, 25,000 hours is 1,041 days, while 1,200 hours is only 50 days.

And the price difference is not that large. A 6 pack of 75 watt LEDs on Amazon is \$18.27, and an eight pack of incandescents is \$14.99.

17. Incorporate No-Spend Days

Just one day a week, every week, designate one day as a no-spend day. I've done this periodically, and I'll admit it's harder than it sounds.

When I was doing it, I realized that literally, the only time I left my house without spending any money is when I go running or hang out down the block with my neighbors.

So to have successful no-spend days, either do not leave your home for any reason or plan ahead and have some things to do that don't cost money.

Easy Ways to Save Big Money Annually

Okay! Our savings are adding up. Now we're going to save some big money, but as I promised, it will be painless.

18. Kill Credit Card Debt

This is the big one. If you have credit card debt, it's impossible to make progress on your personal finance goals. This debt is an emergency, and you have to get rid of it.

Make a plan of attack, the snowball and stacking methods both work well. Stacking saves the most money because it pays off the highest interest cards first.

For me, the snowball method worked better, paying off the smallest debts first. And I did it by paying a small amount of money on the card I was working to pay off first every day.

I figured out how much I needed to pay per day to pay the card off in 30 days and paid it daily. It's nonsensical, but breaking it down to a smaller daily payment rather than a big monthly payment made it seem less intimidating. And it worked. The important thing is to concentrate on one card at a time.

If you have good credit, consider getting a consolidation loan to pay off your credit card debt. You still have debt, but the interest rate will be much lower.

Another option for those with good credit is a 0% APR balance transfer credit card.

19. Refinance Student Loan Debt

The interest rates on federal student loans aren't too high, but if you have good credit, you might be able to refinance for a lower rate. And if your loans are private and you have good credit, you can almost certainly refinance for a lower rate.

Even a small drop in the interest rate, you're paying can mean thousands of dollars in savings over the life of the loan.

20. Stop Paying Fees

You should not be paying for things like having a banking or checking account or taking cash out of your bank account. If your bank charges you fees switch to one that doesn't (like Chime).

If your credit card charges an annual fee (and you don't take advantage of the perks) downgrade to a card in the same family (canceling a card hurts your credit score), that doesn't. Investing isn't free, but it's worth paying for. You don't want to pay too much in investment fees, though. You can use Personal Capital's Fee Analyzer to see how much you're paying to invest.

1% doesn't sound like much, but it can mean thousands and thousands of dollars over time.

21. Trim Recurring Expenses

How many of these things do you pay for each month?

- Gym membership
- Music streaming service

- Movie streaming service
- Magazine/newspaper subscriptions
- Makeup, jewelry, snack, pet toy, etc. subscription box
- Landline
- Free trial period for some service you forgot to cancel but aren't using and are now paying for

I'm sure there are plenty I'm forgetting, but you see what kind of things I'm getting at. If you have some of these and use them regularly, fair enough. But there is likely at least one thing you could cut.

22. Shop Around

Revisit things you pay for every year like car and homeowners insurance. We often start working with a particular company and keep paying the premiums year after year.

There is so much competition among insurance providers that it's worth spending a few minutes shopping online for a better deal.

If you're happy with your current provider but see a better deal elsewhere, call your provider and ask if they'll match the competitor's price. And if you have policies with multiple carriers, look into bundling. You typically get a discount for doing so.

23. Save All Unexpected Money

This year, your raise, bonuses, tax return, birthday money, side hustle money, etc. are going towards paying off your high-interest debt or towards one of your savings goals — not 100% of it.

As I wrote above, you work hard and are entitled to spend some money on whatever you want. But 80% of any unexpected cash you get, goes to debt or savings.

Source: <https://www.listenmoneymatters.com/how-to-save-money-fast/>