

HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON GROCERIES AND EVERYDAY LIVING



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“People first, then money, then things.”

~ **Suze Orman**

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On paper, it may seem like you make more than enough to comfortably provide for your family. But in reality, your money seems to go MIA before you even cash your paycheck, doesn't it?

The necessities are becoming burdens and you feel as if, no matter what you do and no matter how hard you try, you're still living paycheck-to-paycheck.

Does this sound familiar? If so, you're not alone.

Millions of Americans feel this pressure each and every day. Although many people can blame the economy for their hardships, ***if you have a healthy income coming into your household each month, you're already ahead of the game.***

Chances are that you do make more than enough to support your family. However, ***the true challenge isn't the incoming cash flow; it's the unmonitored outgoing cash flow.***

Once you learn the necessary tricks to shave a few dollars off of most expenses, and the hard knocks of learning how to truly budget your income, you'll finally have room to breathe!

“The art of living easily as to money is to pitch your scale of living one degree below your means.”

~ Sir Henry Taylor

MINIMIZE SMALL EXPENSES

It's all too easy to unsuspectingly accumulate small expenses that actually amount to a sizable figure each month. In order to truly save money in everyday life, it will benefit you greatly to cut a few corners.

While the big corners, like your mortgage payment or car payment may be untouchable, slashing small corners, like snagging lower interest rates, choosing prepaid cell phones and downgrading your cable package are doable. And, in doing so, you can save a significant amount each month.

DOWNGRADE YOUR TECHNOLOGY

Can you honestly say that you use your cell phone's \$30 data plan enough to justify the cost? What about the 1,000 HD channels you so eagerly paid for? And, do you consider it worthwhile to pay a monthly premium for having a Smartphone, never mind the initial cost of the device?

Clearly, you know that you can save a few dollars by downgrading your current technology. But, just how much can you save? Below, we'll take a look at your potential savings.

- 1. Premium Channels.** All cable/satellite providers try to up-sell you on the notion of HBO, Cinemax and Showtime. Just one channel costs \$15 a pop. But, if you're lured into the triple channel plan, you're paying a minimum of \$45 per month.

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- If you trim just one premium channel, you can save upwards of \$15 per month, \$180 per year, \$900 in five years and \$1,800 in 10-years.
- If you trim three premium channels, ***you can save upwards of \$45 per month, \$540 per year, \$2,700 in five years or \$5,400 over 10-years.***

2. High speed internet. If you're willing to wait a few more seconds for a webpage to load, you can save big bucks on your internet bill.

- Verizon offers high speed internet starting at \$30 per month. AT&T offers a DSL package for as little as \$15 per month. EarthLink offers cable internet for just \$30 per month. If you downgrade to AT&T from Time Warner Cable's standard cable package of \$70 per month, you'll save \$55 per month!
- Steer clear of low entry offers, such as \$30 per month for the first 3-months and \$65 thereafter. When you sign a contract just for the low introductory rate, you're trapped into paying exorbitant fees for the duration of your contract.

3. Smartphones. Smartphones are nifty gadgets. You can Google just about anything on the go, make appointments with friends, and play music on your phone.

- Alternatively, an MP3 player allows you to play as many songs as you'd like. If you need to Google something, wait until you get to your computer. A written planner that costs less than \$10 will effectively keep track of your schedule.

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- If you can sacrifice the convenience of an all-in-one device, and opt for a regular data-free plan, you can save \$15 to \$45 per month!
- Smartphones seem to be good deals. But in reality, they're money-suckers. Not only are you stuck with high-priced monthly plans. But in addition to that plan, you must pay a \$15 to \$30 data plan fee in order to access the perks of a Smartphone.

4. Going prepaid. Prepaid phones are no longer for kiddies and college students. Companies like Virgin Mobile and Boost Mobile are offering all-inclusive plans starting as low as \$25 per month.

- If you choose a prepaid Smartphone, you must still pay for a data plan. But, if you're paying \$25 for your talk/text plan, even with the added cost of a data plan, you're snagging an amazing deal.
- If you currently pay the standard rate of \$75 to \$100 per cell phone plan and choose to downgrade to Virgin Mobile's \$25 per month plan, you can save anywhere from \$50 to \$75 per month!

Chances are that you've been able to identify areas of your life where you can confidently choose to downgrade. If you can save just \$150 per month, over the course of a year, your savings will amount to \$1,800. In five years, those monthly savings will total \$9,000 and **in 10-years, your grand total will be \$18,000!**

Would you rather spend \$18,000 on premium cable, internet, and cell phone fixings? Or, do you think your money would be put to better use by purchasing a new car outright, putting a down

payment on a home, or paying for your child's college education? The choice is yours.

“We buy things we don't need, with money we don't have, in order to impress people we don't like.”

~ **Dave Ramsey**

SNAG A LOWER INTEREST RATE

Most consumers believe that they're stuck with the interest rate creditors deemed them worthy of at the inception of their accounts. But little else could be farther from the truth.

If you're a good customer, you should be rewarded for your timely payments and overall good credit score. If you're willing to play hardball and haggle, you just may be able to half your interest rate or decrease it by several points.

So, what do you need to snag a lower interest rate? Below, we'll discuss the necessities.

- A solid payment history
- Longstanding accounts with the creditor
- Script
- Hagglng skills

The first two necessities are self-explanatory; their only use is qualifying you as a good candidate. However, you also need to be able to haggle your way down to a desirable interest rate and have a script on hand to guide you through the process.

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Your script can look something like this:

“Hi, I’m calling because I’m being offered substantially lower interest rates through one of your competitors. The offer is very appealing. But, if you’re able to slash my interest rate, I’m willing to stay with your company. What can you do for me?”

According to a study carried out by Bankrate.com, 50% of subjects which used a similar script were able to snag lower interest rates on the very first call.

A word of caution: be prepared to haggle.

- If you’re offered a lower interest rate without haggling, this is good news. This signifies that there is wiggle room, as ***no creditor would put their best offer on the table at first rumble.***
- Aim higher than you need. If you’re hoping for a 12% interest rate, ask for a 9.5% rate outright. Even if you go up from the 9.5% during negotiations, you may still end up with the 12% you were hoping for. You might not get your ideal rate, but you may get something that’s close enough.
- If your customer service representative isn’t budging, ask to speak to a supervisor. The supervisor may be primed to offer an attractive rate in order to keep you as a customer.

“Money will buy you a fine dog.
But only love can make it wag its tail.”

~ **Richard Freidman**

SAVING ON GROCERIES

Purchasing groceries for your family can easily become one of your steepest household expenses. Fortunately, if you're willing to dedicate a few hours each week to mastering the art of strategically using coupons, you can feed your family for a fraction of the traditional cost.

WHY USE COUPONS?

For decades, there has been a stigma attached to the use of coupons. As a result, less than 1% of coupons generally get used each year. In 2006, of the over \$331 billion worth of coupons that were released to consumers, only \$2.6 billion were cashed in.

However, savvy couponing aficionados around the nation are feeding their families for nearly free!

According to Good Morning America, Kathy Spencer of Massachusetts feeds her family of six for an average of \$5 per week. Jill Cataldo, of www.supercouponing.com, scores groceries, detergents and personal care products for free on a regular basis.

If you'd like to save as much money as Kathy and Jill, your first stop is learning where to locate the best coupons.

TOP 5 PLACES TO FIND COUPONS

Coupons are as good as cash. **Each dollar you save with a coupon is a dollar you get to keep in your wallet.** Therefore, it only makes sense to track down coupons of the highest value.

- 1. Sunday paper.** The Sunday paper is by far the most popular way to receive coupons.
 - Each week, you'll receive two inserts from Redplum and Smart Source. And, once per month, you'll receive an additional high-value insert from P&G (Procter and Gamble).
- 2. Coupons.com.** You can print coupons from your home computer by simply logging onto Coupons.com. This website boasts one of the largest databases of consumer coupons on the internet.
 - There are also many other online coupon distributors available. However, Coupons.com is recommended as it is the most reputable.
 - In order to print coupons, you'll need to install the website's coupon-printer software. This helps combat the printing of duplicate coupons, as **each individual coupon is given its own barcode.**

3. Company websites. Many well trusted brands, such as Arm & Hammer and Betty Crocker, offer unadvertised coupons on their website. Visit the promo/special offers section of the website in order to find available deals.

- Sometimes, the company will ask you to input your mailing address so they can mail coupons directly to your door rather than printing online.

4. Social networking websites. Popular brands capitalize on the social networking platforms by offering coupons to those that re-tweet their messages or join their Facebook fan pages.

- Frequent coupon blogs. Many of these blogs are operated by savvy stay at home moms. Plus, the blogs are updated several times each day as soon as the news of a new coupon, freebie, or deal hits the streets.
- Reputable blogs/websites to join are www.moneysavingmom.com, www.couponmom.com and www.coupondivas.com.

5. Call the manufacturer. Call the customer service branch of a brand that you love and ask them to mail coupons directly to your door. ***This is a little known trick of the trade that only the bravest of savvy coupon users employ.***

- It may seem daunting to be so forward as to ask for coupons from a manufacturer. But, manufacturers put out coupons anyway - it wouldn't be a burden to mail you a set of coupons.

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- Remember, this request is mutually beneficial. You save money, and the manufacturer makes a sale. So muster up all of your courage and start dialing those digits!

Clearly, using coupons can save you money instantly. However, you can **multiply your savings** by learning how to match coupons with your store's weekly circular.

Below, we'll cover a few of the best tactics to make the most from your coupons.

MATCHING COUPONS TO CIRCULARS

Coupon matching is a simple practice. When you receive the Sunday paper, look through both the circulars and the coupon inserts and match up the best deals.

If there are free or extremely cheap deals that scream "buy me," head to the grocery store as soon as possible. **The best deals tend to sell out well before Wednesday.**

Additionally, for the sake of organization, fight the temptation to clip every coupon. Only clip the coupons you need for your shopping trip this week. Leave the others in the insert. Save your inserts in a folder or drawer each week as they will come in handy later.

There are two instances when your coupon will be worth its weight in gold:

1. **The coupon is released this week.** Generally, stores will advertise sale prices on items which have coupons

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released in the same week in order to spike sales for that specific product.

- Many times, store circulars will have a small notification about coupons next to an item that can be matched up with a newly released coupon.

2. **The coupon is nearing expiration.** Stores keep track of coupons even more diligently than consumers!

- If the store is aware that a coupon is nearing its expiration date, the lowest possible prices are likely to be offered.

Tip: *Become familiar with your store's coupon policies.*

Generally, there should be at least one grocer in your area which doubles coupons. Contact your store's manager to find out which stores employ this coupon policy.

SHOPPING AT THE DRUGSTORE

Drugstores give you the biggest bang for your buck because they allow you to stack manufacturer coupons with in-store coupons and customer loyalty reward programs. Below, we'll cover the reward programs for Rite Aid and CVS.

1. **CVS.** This pharmacy offers Extra Care Bucks (ECBs) to customers with reward cards. You earn ECBs by

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purchasing select items that are marked with the Extra Care tag.

- When you earn ECBs, you can use them on your next in-store purchase to pay for any item in the store on your next visit. **At CVS ECBs = cash.**
- CVS allows you to stack coupons. Coupon stacking is the practice of using a manufacturer coupon in addition to a store coupon jointly on one item.
- ***By combining your ECBs and stacking coupons, you can often walk out of the store with free products!***

2. **Rite Aid.** This pharmacy offers Single Check Rebates (SCRs) to their customers. This is a mail-in-rebate program. When a product is marked with a SCR, you can receive the outlined amount back in the form of a check.

- Rite Aid offers many products that work out to be free after the rebate! You can further your savings by stacking coupons in addition to the rebate. ***Many times, you'll snag a product for free, and still receive the full value of the SCR!***
- Rite Aid is consumer friendly; you can actually fill out your rebate online rather than sending the form through snail mail.

As you can see, there are many small changes that you can make in your everyday life in order to save big bucks. By simply downgrading certain packages, such as your internet, and strategically using coupons, you can save several hundred dollars per month!

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At first, clipping coupons and being the only one in your social circle without a Smartphone certainly isn't fun. But, once you become a seasoned pro, you'll begin to choose the benefits and rewards of frugality.

“Don't tell me where your priorities are.
Show me where you spend your money
and I'll tell you what they are.”

~ **James W. Frick**