

Budgeting Your Bulldog Bucks

1) Live Within Your Means

Don't spend every penny you have. Choosing to live with less doesn't necessarily mean doing without; skip buying something you don't need today, so you can have something better in the future.

2) Track Your Spending

In order to make the best budgeting decision for your lifestyle, you need to know where your money goes. Keep track of your receipts and cash spending; categorize everything you buy, even a pack of gum! At the end of one month you should be able to see patterns forming; these are your current spending priorities. What needs to change?

3) Prioritize Spending

Since we can't have everything we want, we have to prioritize. Once we know what's truly important to us, cutting back on less important items really isn't a sacrifice. While rent and student loan payments are fixed expenses that must be paid, eating out and going to the movies are luxuries that may have to be delayed until a later time.

4) Make Savings Automatic

Pay yourself first! One of the most important rules of saving money is making it a priority. Have a set amount automatically withdrawn from each paycheck into a savings account and watch how quickly your savings grow. Direct deposit makes saving simple because you won't miss what you don't see.

5) Build a Safety Net

Create an emergency fund so you don't blow your budget or have to rely on credit cards or payday loans if something unexpected happens. Aim to save at least three months' worth of living expenses.

6) Tackle Credit Card Debt

Stop using your credit cards and focus on paying off the debt you already owe. Start by paying more than the minimum payment due. To save on interest, tackle the credit card with the highest interest rate first or, for faster satisfaction, pay more on the card with the smallest balance. When one balance is fully paid, add that payment to the payment for another account until it's paid. Repeat these steps until all accounts are paid in full.

7) Pay with Cash

For a while, try paying for everyday items with cash. This makes it easier to see where your money is going. Constantly paying with a credit or debit card may not "feel" like spending money. Handing someone your cash will make you stop and think about the importance of the purchase.

8) Don't Cut Out the Fun

One common budgeting mistake many people make is failing to allocate money for entertainment. Work to live, but don't live to work. All budgets should allow a bit of fun and flexibility!

