

MONEY SMART FOR A HEAD START

Spending Your Money



What does the word “budget” mean to you? Pinching your pennies or clenching your wallet? Now think about the words “spending plan.”

A Spending Plan:

- Makes it easier to put your money where you want it to go.
- Helps you think about where you can spend your money. It’s more fun than thinking about all the places you can’t spend it!

A spending plan is like a road map for your money. It helps you:

- Make ends meet day to day.
- Save for future goals.
- Get through unexpected or emergency expenses.
- Not have to depend on credit.
- Talk about money with your family.

Where you spend your money is personal. The goal is to spend money on the things most important to you and your family.



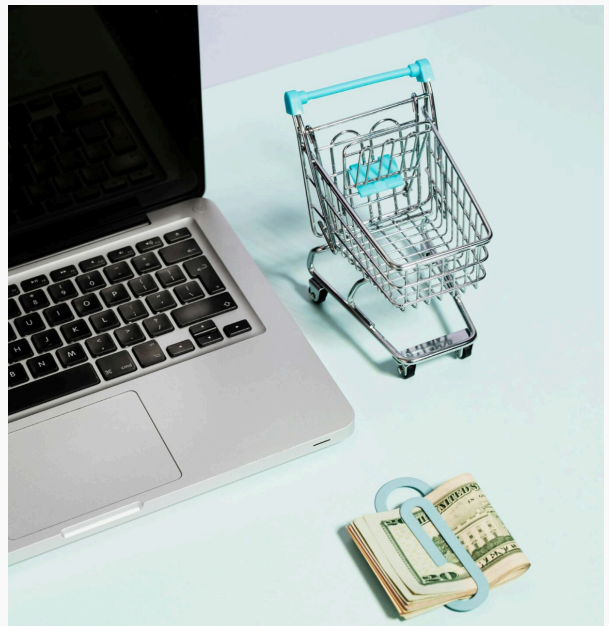
Track Your Spending

Everyone can benefit from knowing where their money goes each month. Tracking your spending can help you find spending leaks that you may have forgotten about – streaming services, eating out, or a daily snack.

Try one of these ideas:

- Save receipts or write down the amount in a notebook or on a calendar whenever you buy something.
- Use your bank or credit union mobile app to track your checking account withdrawals in the last month. How was the money used?
- Try a free online budgeting worksheet, like this [*Creating a cash flow budget*](#), which helps you sort expenses into major spending areas like food, housing, car, and kids every month.
- Download a budgeting app on your phone. There are free and paid apps that let you track spending and even earn points as you build your financial health.

Tracking will tell you at which stores and other places you spend money. This will help you make future decisions about your spending and what you want your money to do for you.



To \$um it up

- \$ A “spending plan” is a roadmap to help you head in the right direction.
- \$ You have more control over some expenses than others.
- \$ Tracking can help you know where your money goes. This helps you make future decisions.
- \$ Bottom line – after tracking your spending, ask yourself if you are happy with where your money is going?

Want to Learn More?

- Visit our website for more financial education resources. <https://finances.extension.wisc.edu>
- Contact your local Extension Educator: <https://counties.extension.wisc.edu>
- For help with balancing your monthly spending plan, contact the nonprofit National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) at <https://www.nfcc.org> or 800.388.2227.