

The Road to Financial Freedom

Use Back-To-School Time To Teach Budget Basics

Back-to-school time is a great time to help children learn the value of a dollar.

Budget Before Shopping



boxes, calculators and backpacks can be reused if they are in good shape.

When you go shopping, take a printout of your estimated budget on your shopping excursions and have your child enter actual expenses.



Lessons In Cost Cutting



Try to do some research before you shop regarding an amount that you can spend on school supplies. Let your child help prepare that budget with you by inviting them to share or list what they feel they need. Research prices together by looking at local flyers or going online.

Once you and your child have researched prices in local flyers or online you can calculate the total amount together to see if you are over or under budget. If you have an older child they can exercise more freedom in making out their budget if they get an allowance, have a job, etc.

You may want to consider hosting a “back-to-school swap” prior to spending any money on necessary items. Get together with neighbors and friends to trade learning aids, books and unwanted school supplies.

When You Shop

Check to see if there are any items on your child's school supply list that you already have.

Items from last year such as rulers, pencil



Encourage your child or teen to clip coupons, look for sales, or frequent dollar stores or discount retailers for less expensive alternatives of their back-to-school needs. Feel free to make shopping fun and interesting by using free apps such as Flipp, which delivers circulars to your mobile device, or Red Laser, which helps shoppers compare prices on chosen items.

Teaching your child the value of comparing prices can help them avoid impulse buying or paying too much for an item.

Now might also be a good time to teach your child about delayed gratification and tradeoffs. For example, forgoing an expensive item until it fits into the budget or sacrificing another item on the list for something he/she needs more at the time.

At the end of every season, try to shop at all the sales and purchase things that will fit your child next year.

Reward For Good Budget Behavior

Feel free to reward your child that stays in line with the budget. Treat him/her to a special lunch or treat after your shopping trip could help teach them that budgets aren't bad things and saving money is a reward in itself.



Teaching The Value Of Money Is Important All Year

Consider everyday activities as opportunities to teach your child the value of money.

- Remember that every choice your son or daughter makes – from renting an apartment to purchasing a vehicle – can impact their financial situation and you will be there best teacher.

- Turn a regular trip to the grocery store into a chance to explain the value of price comparison, using mobile apps, coupons and other comparison techniques.

- Once you feel your child is old enough to understand the value of money consider giving him/her an allowance. Help them build their understanding of budgeting and setting realistic financial goals.



- If your child expresses interest in purchasing an expensive item, such as a computer, it would be wise to show them how many hours they will need to work to pay for the item. Emphasize wants vs. needs.

- Consider allowing your child to be part of family discussions about finances. This may help instill the importance of living within your means and staying out of or tackling debt issues.

- When your child reaches his/her “tween” or teen years, you may begin to consider whether or not they are ready to open a personal checking account. See the article on page two for more information.

Spare Change

Bank Offers ATM Access Without A Card

Rising Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) thefts have prompted a Chicago-based bank to introduce a mobile app that allows users to access ATMs using a smartphone rather than an ATM or debit card.

Reportedly, all ATMs affiliated with BMO Harris Bank will display a QR code (small boxes that look like similar to black and white static), which can be scanned by iPhone and Android phones. Customers are then prompted to type how much cash they want into the phone. Cash will then be dispensed by the ATM.

According to BMOHarris.com the new Mobile Cash app makes it safer and faster for its customers to withdraw cash at ATMs. According to the website, no information will be stored in the ATM or on a phone, and the system will thwart some of the ways that dishonest people have been using to access accounts to hijack information from a card's magnetic strip.



FTC: Data Security Company Failed To Protect Customer Data

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), a top data security company has allegedly failed to protect customer information.

The FTC has filed a complaint in U.S. District Court alleging that an information and data security company deceived consumers with false claims regarding the effectiveness of its services.

A previous order in 2010 required the company to establish and maintain further measures to better protect customers' personal data and information. However, the FTC claims this was not done satisfactorily. The complaint reportedly is related to past, not current, business practices of the security company.

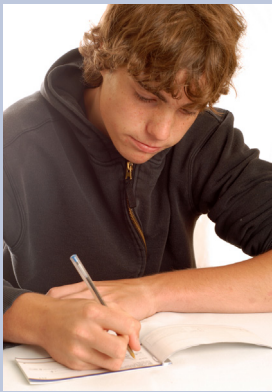
"We disagree with the substance of the FTC's contentions and are prepared to take our case to court," said a representative of the alleged company. "Security of our systems has always been, and will remain, of primary importance to us."



Is Your Teen Ready For A Checking Account?

Here are a few tips to help you get started if you feel your teen is responsible enough to handle his/her own checking account.

Finding The Right Account. Fees and minimum balance requirements vary depending on banks and types of checking accounts. Help your child research what account would best meet their needs and encourage them to research different institutions to see who can give them the best offer. Ask your bank if they offer special checking accounts for students.



Account Basics. Once they open an account, stress to your teen the importance of needs vs. wants and keeping track of expenses. Remind them that withdrawing in excess of their balance can result in costly fees and penalties.

Discuss ways to monitor his/her account balance by using an online banking website, text alerts or electronic apps. Consider whether it would be a good idea for your

teen to open a checking account that has a debit or ATM card.

Prevent Identity Theft. Checks, debit cards, personal identification numbers, account statements and passwords must be safeguarded at all times.

Help your teen consider ways to keep their personal information private in public places they may frequent such as gyms or dorm rooms.

Serve As Your Child's Money Coach. It is crucial for a parent to be actively involved in making sure children learn fundamental financial concepts.

Banks make it easier for parents and guardians by requiring them to co-sign on the teen's checking account creating a partnership between adult, child and bank. This could benefit your teen, making money guidance available when they take this important step.



CUMBERSOME CARD CURE-ALL

KeyRing is a free app for iOS and Android mobile devices that serves as a "digital wallet" for loyalty program membership information. Cards can be scanned from your phone and rewards can be tracked anywhere you have mobile service!

Corner

The Benefits Of UCAN

Here are just a few features of UCAN that can benefit you:

Online Call Logs: When you visit www.ucan.net, you can read informative articles, download essential forms, and complete your Call Logs online.

Tracking calls is the first step in protecting yourself from abusive debt collectors. If you choose to fill out your Call Logs on-line, they will be kept secure and sent to us directly. All you need to do is enter your user name and password; click on Call Log, and enter the information related to the call.

You also have the option of printing your Call Log sheets and filling them in by hand. To print copies of the Call Log sheets, click on Forms, then Debt Collector Call Log, and print it out. Please try to fax or mail these call logs to UCAN as often as possible.

An Experienced Staff: Our team of consumer advocates will continue to provide you with superior customer service and offer techniques to help reduce collector harassment. As we handle a larger number of client cases, we can identify collection trends and patterns of harassment.

If you feel that you have experienced debt collection abuse, contact UCAN immediately.

Employees Who Care. UCAN realizes that overcoming debt problems is very difficult. Dishonest collectors that use questionable tactics do not make this process any easier. We can help you deal with these issues so you can focus on settling your debts.

Do not hesitate to call us at 1-877-462-8226 if you have any questions. You may also e-mail us at info@ucan.net. Our FAX number is 1-877-895-7577. Our normal business hours are Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST and Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST.



Take Proactive Steps To Overcome Financial Setbacks



Sometimes it takes just one unexpected setback or emergency to trigger a debt crisis.

It is normal for some people to have feelings of loss and doubt after a less-than-positive life experience. However, it is important to move ahead and find ways to get back on your feet again. Here are a few tips on how to stay proactive if life throws you a curve.

Natural Disasters. Your local branch of the American Red Cross could provide you with basic needs such as food and clothing immediately following a disaster. Visit www.RedCross.org for more information. In addition, The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers many assistance programs to those affected by disasters. Visit FEMA.gov and click on "Disaster Survivor Assistance" at the top to learn more about the program.

It would be wise to make a list of all relevant numbers and contact information. This should include checking, savings and credit cards numbers, as well as insurance policy numbers.

If possible, invest in a fireproof lock box where you could store this list along with copies of important documents such as your driver's license, social security card and insurance policies. It is a good idea to keep everything filed and organized in case you need to get to the information quickly.



Losing A Job. If you experience a job loss, it would be a good idea to quickly begin taking action. Try visiting the Department of Labor at Dol.gov (866-487-2365) to learn more about unemployment benefits and to search lists of unemployment offices according to state. Also, you could review your employer's severance benefits, including the temporary continuation of your health insurance under COBRA. You might also want to explore your options under the Affordable Care Act.

In addition, you might qualify for the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC). Go to Irs.gov and do a key word search for HCTC for more information and to see if you are eligible.

A Medical Emergency. Since mistakes can happen, it might be wise to review all doctor and hospital bills and insurance claim payments/denials. If you find a discrepancy on your bill and cannot resolve the dispute with a doctor, hospital or insurer, you might want to contact your state consumer protection office or insurance regulator for guidance.

Try to keep all bills, cancelled checks or other receipts in one place so you know where they are for tax time for your tax preparer in the event you may qualify for tax savings.

Death Of A Family Member. Try to locate important documents, such as insurance policies, as well as an original copy of the most recent will. It is a good idea to make multiple copies of the death certificate, which will be needed to apply for death benefits (such as through life insurance policies or Social Security) and to access bank and other accounts.



Divorce. You may have to consider making some important financial changes if a divorce occurs. When it comes to spending, recognize that living your old lifestyle may not be possible on one salary.

According to Kiplinger.com, you should also consider updating your will and the list of beneficiaries you designate on life insurance policies at this time.





Inspiring Thoughts

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

***~Henry David Thoreau,
Walden, 1854***

Do you have a dream? Most of us can answer that question with a resounding, "Yes." For each of us, the dream is unique. Perhaps you want to achieve something particular during your lifetime. If you are facing debt, maybe you dream of having financial freedom.

With a little luck and a lot of hard work, most of our dreams can be attainable.

In Walden, Henry David Thoreau refers to castles in the air. Perhaps he means that if you build a solid foundation on your dreams, stay persistent and keep working toward your goal, anything can be within your reach.

Has debt temporarily derailed your dreams? You don't want debt to win, do you?

Have you ever been to the beach? If you have,

perhaps you built a castle in the sand not realizing how close to the shore you were. You may have left your beautiful creation there that evening only to return the next day to find that a wave had destroyed your efforts. Hopefully, you looked around and found plenty of sand to build another castle, bigger and stronger than the first and further away from danger.

When you experience a setback, what do you do? Do you walk away and give up on your 'castle'? Or will you assess your situation, get digging and build again after learning from your mistake?

It is important to avoid blaming ourselves for

bad decisions and learn from our mistakes. If you dream of financial freedom, consider rebuilding your ideas about spending.

If you have already made the decision to work with a debt settlement program, you could be making the effort toward building a solid foundation underneath your dream.

Whatever your goal, it is a good idea to keep dreaming and keep working.

As Martin Luther King Jr. said, during his historic speech in August of 1963, "I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream."

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Company Announcements



Concerned About Your Credit Score? Completing a debt settlement program can be a rewarding experience. However, once you have graduated from your program, you may be concerned about your credit rating. Century Negotiations has partnered with Century Credit Services whose vision is to provide a low cost, yet highly effective, credit restoration program to clients who have inconsistent or inaccurate information reporting on his or her credit report. CCS staff members would like to speak with you! CCS offers a free consultation and will help you in reviewing your current credit report. If your report includes any incorrect items, it may be determined that you are a good candidate for credit restoration. **CCS has a pay per deletion policy and many clients see improvements after the first month.** Call 877-809-6610 today!



Online Settlement Offers: Have you ever missed calls from us because you weren't home or couldn't get away from your desk? Have you ever lost an important e-mail from your settlement company? You can now approve your settlements online! All you need to do is go to www.CenturyNI.com and click 'Client Login' (or click 'First Time Users') to get your CNI ID and password. If there is a settlement awaiting your approval you can review the details and approve it immediately! Your approvals are sent back 'real-time' to our representatives, so we can act on your behalf as soon as we hear from you. If you've received a call, an e-mail or text message about your program but haven't had the time to get back to us, approving and managing your offers online is an easy way for you stay uninterrupted while we make your settlement program a success!

Now Available: Live Chat!



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