

10 Ways to Stay In Budget

Budgeting your earnings is something you may have heard over and over again. For those that do try it, you may find that sticking to it is not as easy as 'experts' make it seem. The truth is, budgeting is a discipline and it takes effort but there are some essentials to follow to ensure that you stay within your budget.

1. **Save.** By now you should know how much money passes through your hands monthly and how much you can afford to put into savings. Decide on this amount and be diligent in putting it away into a savings account or a mutual fund.
2. **Resort to Cash.** Try to determine how much money you will need for the week and make one weekly withdrawal. Section out that money into each day of the week, and travel with only that amount on you. When you are mindful of the amount you have allocated to daily expenditure you will be less tempted to overspend. It goes hand-in-hand also with you leaving your debit and credit cards at home. Less temptation means you will be less likely to buy what you do not necessarily need.
3. **Break your bad habits.** Not many persons tell you about your habits when they are talking about money. For those that do indulge in smoking or regular drinking of alcohol or any other costly habit should calculate the amount spent on this habit weekly then monthly. Cut back on those and see the savings that you could make. Not to mention the improvement to your health.
4. **Share the responsibility.** If you are genuinely concerned about staying within your budget, then those persons in your family should be equally supportive. It makes no sense you try to stay within a budget and your spouse's casual spending puts a strain on your efforts. Involving the whole family in the process of making and keeping a budget is important. Set aside an agreeable amount that will be used as spending money for each person.
5. **Pay down on Debt.** If you have credit card debt to pay off do not miss a payment. A good way to tackle several credit cards is to make the largest payments on the credit card with the highest interest rate and pay the minimum balance on the others. Do that for each card until they are all paid off.

6. **Keep your Receipts.** It may have been something that was easy to do when you had just started budgeting but then you stopped doing it the moment you got the hang of budgeting. Keeping receipts helps you to see the actual amount you spend on each purpose and helps you to categorize the money spent. It also comes in handy when you will need to cut back on some expenditure.
7. **Balance your checkbook.** For those that write checks, it is important to keep a track of how many checks you write so that you do not end up in overdraft. Be mindful of the amount you have in your account and ensure that the total on the checks you write do not exceed what is in the account. Making carbon copies of the checks you write is one option to keep track of the amount you write.
8. **Analyze your spending.** This is something you can do on a regular basis. Look at the receipts of your purchases and determine what you spend too much money on, what things are luxuries, what are necessities, where can you make extra savings on. There are many things in each of our budgets that we spend money on that could result in savings if we revised it. How many nights do you order out for dinner? How many drinks do you buy per outing? How many coffees do you buy per week?
9. **Get a Special Account.** From time to time you may find yourself dipping into your savings account because something in your budget needed some more money. This can hurt your savings. It is recommended that you get a savings account with penalties for early withdrawal. These accounts usually have higher interest rates than a regular savings account.
10. **Be flexible.** Yes budgeting is a discipline but you have to be mindful of the fact that we live in a world that constantly changes and things happen that were not planned for. As such ensure that each month, a section of your income is budgeted under variable/miscellaneous. If this was not touched from the previous month, do not pit into the following month's budget as 'flexible cash'. Keep it in savings as variable/miscellaneous. Remember, anything can happen.