

Behind on bills?
Start with one step.



Consumer Financial
Protection Bureau

Your Money,
Your Goals

Who is the CFPB?

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau works on your behalf. We want you to have the information you need to make good financial decisions for yourself and for your family.

We're here for you. We are a government agency that was created by Congress in 2010 in response to the financial crisis.

We're taking action. We work to make sure banks, lenders, and others operate fairly.

We're committed to you. We are committed to helping people enjoy safer, better financial lives.



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Behind on bills?

When bills are piling up, it's important to remember that you're still in control. The small steps you choose to take can lead to big changes.

We created this set of tools to fit your needs, whether that means short-term financial help, longer-term financial health, or something in between. The tools are designed to help you handle money emergencies, cut down on stress from mounting bills, and build your finances to where you want them to be.

You can fix this; we can help.

Start with one step.

For more information, you can refer to the full "Your Money, Your Goals" toolkit:

cfpb.gov/your-money-your-goals

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This tool may ask you to provide sensitive information. The CFPB does not collect this information and is not responsible for how your information may be used if you provide it to others. The CFPB recommends that you do not include names, account numbers, or other sensitive information and that users follow their organization's policies regarding personal information.

Where does all my money come from?



This tool will help you:

- **Get a total picture** of your income and financial resources
- **Remember** when all your funds are coming in
- **Think about how to plan** your expenses to avoid gaps in your ability to pay

Start with one question:

How many sources of income do you have?

What you'll need:

- All your pay stubs and benefits statements, and records of electronic payments from the month

Some examples of income: any jobs, self-employment, seasonal work (shoveling, harvesting)

Some examples of government program benefits: Disability insurance (SSI, SSDI), Social Security, TANF, SNAP

Other types of income: Child support, gifts, tax refunds, help from family or friends

A step further

Is your income more or less than you thought it was?

Does this feel like a typical month for you?

Does seeing your income week by week change how you think about your spending?

Wondering about the difference between net and gross income?

Gross income is what you earn before taxes or other deductions are taken from your pay. **Net income** is your gross income minus taxes and other deductions.

Additional resources







You may qualify for additional benefits. Check here:

[benefits.gov](https://www.benefits.gov)

Use this **income tracker** to plan the best times to save and to spend.

- 1 Write in the names of any income and benefits that apply to you.
- 2 Fill out the table with the amounts you receive each week.
- 3 Total up each week's income.
- 4 Circle the payments that come at a predictable time and amount. This will show you the income you can count on each month.

Month of _____

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
 Primary job:					
 Government program:					
 Disability benefits:					
 Financial support:					
 Additional:					
 Additional:					
 Additional:					

Weekly totals:

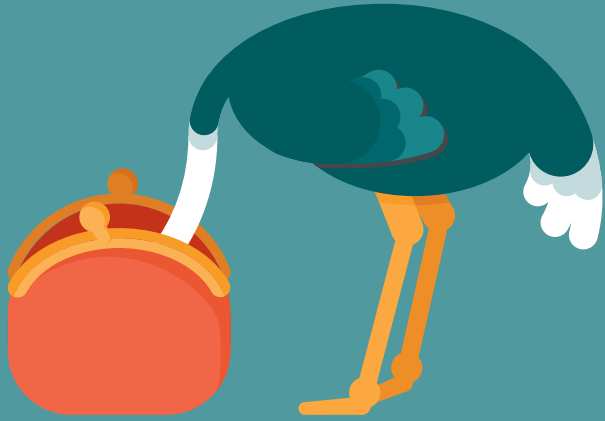
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Total income for this month:

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SPENDING TRACKER

Where does my money go?



This tool will help you:

- **Track your spending** for a month
- **Analyze your spending** by category
- **Identify areas** you might cut back on
- **Set a goal** to keep you on track

What you'll need:

- All your receipts and bill statements from the month
- Any online records of your spending
- An envelope to keep your receipts in

TIP: *There are free apps available to help you track your spending*

Start with one question:

How much do you think you spent last month?

A step further

Are you spending money on items you don't need?

Needs are things you can't live without, like shelter, utilities, food, clothing, and transportation. Needs may also include obligations: things you have to pay, like debt, child support, alimony, and student loans. Wants, however, are things you can choose to live without.

Needs	Wants
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

One **want** I will cut back on next week:

Use this **spending tracker** to consider what is important to you.

- 1 Get an envelope to collect your receipts.
- 2 Use the table to sort your spending into the categories below. Don't forget about bills you share with others.
- 3 At month's end, total up each category.

This month's spending:

											
Cell phone	Debt payment	Eating out	Education + childcare	Entertainment	Groceries + other supplies	Health expenses	Helping others	Housing + utilities	Pets	Transport	Other

1												
2												
3												
4												
5												

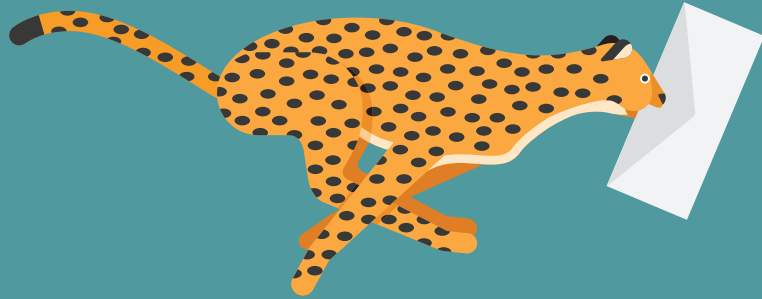
Category totals:

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Total spending for this month:

BILL CALENDAR

What are all my bills and when are they due?



This tool will help you:

- **Get a total picture** of your monthly bills
- **Identify the weeks** when you have the most money due
- **Plan how to pay your bills** on time and avoid late fees
- **Remember** when your bills are coming up

What you'll need:

- All your bill statements from a single month
- Statements of any bills that are online

Some examples of bills: utilities, rent or mortgage, phone, memberships, cable, credit cards, car payments, student loans, child support, insurance

Start with one question:

When you pay your bills on time, how do you feel?

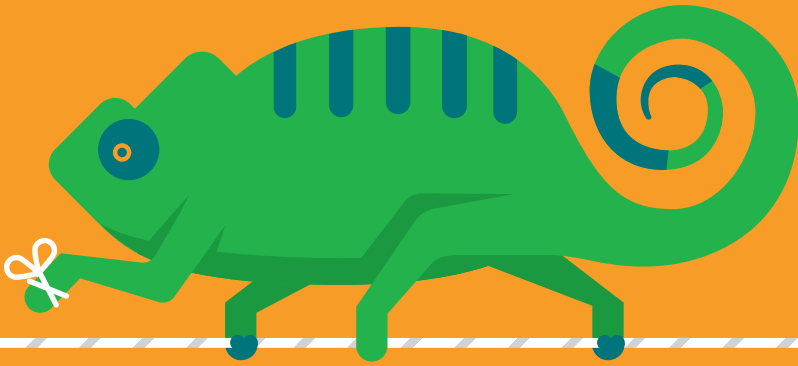
A step further:

- **Balancing act.** Enter your weekly income into the calendar to compare with your weekly bill totals.
- **Other expenses.** Don't forget things like birthday, holiday, and school expenses, or bills that are due every few months or once a year.
- **Top of mind.** You can use this calendar as a daily reminder—just pin it up where you'll see it!

One thing I'm going to try next month:

GOAL SETTING

What is one thing I want to change?



This tool will help you:

- **Identify** the things that really matter to you
- **Work** toward a future that includes those things
- **Track** your progress
- **Take pride** in making life better for you and your family

What to do:

1. **Pick a statement** that interests you
2. **Write down** your goal
3. **Share** your goal with someone who will hold you to it

Start with one question:

How have you helped someone else reach a goal?

A step further

Create an action plan. Think about how long it will realistically take you to reach your goal. Then, make an action plan and stick to it. Don't forget to list any resources that might help you. For example, you might seek out information, tools and equipment, professional assistance, a loan, or find transportation.

Step 1	
Resources needed:	Date to complete:
Step 2	
Resources needed:	Date to complete:
Step 3	
Resources needed:	Date to complete:

One thing
I'm proud of:

One promise
to myself:

One thing
I'd like to
change:

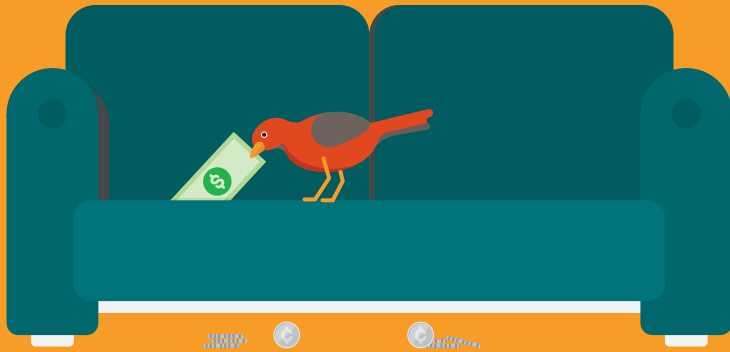
One dream
I have for
myself:

Who can help me?

Date to complete:

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

How can I get extra money out of my situation?



This tool will help you:

- **Earn more** by taking on work or charging for services
- **Get money quickly** by selling stuff or expanding your benefits
- **Spend better** by developing habits that save you money
- **Cut costs** by avoiding fees or canceling memberships

Think about this:

If you run out of money before the end of the month, think about ways you can increase income and decrease spending. This tool has prompts that can put you on the path toward more money in and less money out. Share options you've identified with others in your household and build your plan together.

Start with one question:

What's something that people say you're good at?

A step further








- Borrow DVDs and CDs for free at your local public library.
TIP: *Don't forget to return them on time to avoid late fees.*
- Maintain your car: Keeping up on oil changes and tire pressure can save you money on fuel and repair costs.
- See if you can increase the deductible on your car insurance to lower monthly payments.
- Pay parking tickets and other fines on time to avoid additional charges.
- When buying groceries, check the price label for cost per serving.
TIP: *Sometimes larger quantities don't actually save money.*
- Consider restaurants with "Kids Eat Free" nights.
TIP: *Make sure you know what each offer includes.*
- Look for sales and coupons for things you need.
- Check to see if you qualify for weatherization incentives or programs for your house.

By bringing in more money or resources and spending less, I want to free up:

\$ _____

Think about some ways to **bring in more money.**

Think about some ways to **spend less money.**

<p>Skills I have </p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What do people count on you for? Cooking, crafts, yard work, a second language, babysitting?</p>	<p>Other options I have </p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can you run errands for someone, give people rides, or sell produce from your garden? ▪ Can you sell stuff you no longer need (old equipment, extra clothes) at a yard sale or online?
<p>Programs I can consider </p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Do you qualify for public housing or benefits (TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, LIHEAP)?</p>	
<p>Fees I can avoid </p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Do you pay fees to access your money—for example, from ATMs or check-cashing services? Can you open a no-fee bank account?</p>	<p>Utilities I can reduce </p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Can you unplug appliances when not using them? Can you set your thermostat lower during winter and higher during summer?</p>
<p>Plans I can change </p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>Do you qualify for a “Lifeline” phone rate? Do you have memberships you’re not using (magazine subscriptions, movie-streaming services, gym)?</p>	<p>Habits I can change </p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>What would you consider changing to save money? Cooking at home vs. eating out, buying second-hand vs. buying new?</p>

BONUS CARD

My money picture

1. Grab a pen or highlighter.
2. Look at the board and mark a **check** on any area of life you feel good about.
3. **Circle** any area of life you feel concerned about.



For more information, service providers can refer to the full “Your Money, Your Goals” toolkit online at cfpb.gov/your-money-your-goals

For answers to commonly asked questions you might have about other money matters, visit “Ask CFPB” at cfpb.gov/askcfpb.

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