

Around the House Adjustments That Can Save You Money



Every little bit helps when it comes to making a dent in your monthly expenses. If you've already tried the obvious, like making your coffee at home and skipping the monthly Netflix or Hulu subscription, there are still adjustments that you can make to your day-to-day spending habits that can save you a little extra cash each month. Consider the following options.

At the Grocery

- Many grocery stores send out flyers in the mail showcasing their weekly deals. While many of these unsolicited mailings just get tossed, they can be helpful to peruse when you're planning your grocery list for the week. Tailor your lunches and dinners to what is on sale – and use the coupons, too. Sometimes a shop will double the value of coupons worth less than 50¢. Don't buy something you wouldn't ordinarily buy or are unlikely to use just because you have a coupon, though – these items still cost money, even if they are discounted.
- Join free rewards programs (like those found at Safeway, Giant, and Kroger) to save on everyday grocery purchases. Sometimes these programs also offer partnerships with gas stations to bring you fuel rewards and discounts.
- Consider store brands over brand names and buy whichever costs less week to week.
- Rethink where you shop. Whole Foods is known for being quite expensive, but food sold in the United States – regardless of the shop – has to meet stringent safety standards. The food you find at a discount shop like Aldi or Lidl is just as safe as your more expensive options.
- Consider cash-back apps, like iBotta. There are a variety of coupon apps available for use to help save money. Typically, you submit a photo of your receipt and receive rebates on items purchased. Once your rebates total a minimum amount, you can redeem them for cash or a gift card.

At Home

- Wait to run the dishwasher or laundry until you have a full load. While these appliances have gotten more efficient over time, they still need water and energy to run, so waiting until they're full allows you to get the most value out of each load. Consider high-efficiency appliances when you need to shop for a replacement.
- Depending on the season, consider dropping (in the winter) or raising (in the summer) the temperature at which you set your thermostat. Of course, you want to stay comfortable, but adjusting temperatures by a degree here and there can decrease your utility bill.
- Turn off the lights and unplug appliances and chargers when they're not in use. Even when a device isn't actively being used, if it is plugged in, it can still draw energy. Next time a lightbulb flickers out, replace it with a high-efficiency bulb – these last much longer than the older ones.
- Start a vegetable or herb garden if you have the space. Seeds are generally quite cheap and can provide you with a season's worth of vegetables or herbs. Herbs, in particular, are quite pricey at the grocery store, costing up to \$4 for a single bunch of basil or sage. Cultivating a garden can save you money, and you can enjoy the mental health benefits of gardening as well.
- Get a library card. Many libraries offer services beyond just checking out books – you may be able to rent audiobooks, movies, and other forms of entertainment at no cost simply by visiting your local branch.
- If you rent and want to continue living in the same unit, next time your lease is up for renewal, consider signing a lease that lasts longer than 12 months. Generally, the longer the lease, the cheaper the monthly rent. If you're planning to stay, it's worth getting the discount.
- If you want to buy a home, consider waiting until market conditions are more favorable for buyers (interest rates are currently high) and until you have saved enough of a down payment to create affordable mortgage payments and avoid paying expensive mortgage insurance. Note that you generally don't want your total housing costs to exceed 25% of your take-home pay, so don't buy more house than you can afford.

In the Car

- If you and a coworker live nearby, consider carpooling to and from work to save money on gas. Similarly, if you have children, and other children in the neighborhood attend the same school, carpooling can help not only save money, but also save time – work out a rotation with other parents and gain a bit of time back on your "off" days. If public transit is an option, it may be cheaper than driving, and some places of employment offer transit benefits.
- Make sure that your car is well-maintained and running efficiently. Even small things like maintaining the correct air pressure in your tires can make your car more fuel efficient.
- Save all of your out-of-the-house errands for the same time. The fewer trips you take, the less gas you're likely to use up, especially if many of your destinations are close to each other.
- Save at the pump. Use an app like GasBuddy to find the cheapest gas near to your home or work (or on the way to your destination if you're on a longer drive). If you live or work on a military base, you may be able to get discounted gas at the station on



base. Don't forget to use rewards that you may get through your grocery membership before they expire.

While small changes can help you feel more secure when it comes to paying your utility and grocery bills, they are unlikely to make such a dent that you're able to afford a new car or a higher mortgage. Small changes in your habits can bear fruit, but if you are looking to build an emergency fund, save for a large purchase, or grow your retirement, it's important to set and stay within a spending plan that allows you to funnel funds toward those goals.

Our Education Team is well-versed in family finances and would be happy to help you find places to cut costs and save more money. If you're interested in a one-on-one consultation to help you chart your financial path, you can reach us at education@navymutual.org.