

Module 2  
Section 2

# STRETCHING YOUR DOLLARS

Making Your Money Go  
Farther

# IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL:

Explore the difference between needs  
and wants.

Find out ways to cut out unnecessary  
expenses to save you money.

Discover how small lifestyle changes  
can make a big difference in helping  
you save money.

Learn tricks, tips, and resources to help  
you stretch your dollars.

# STRETCHING YOUR DOLLARS

## How can I make my money go farther?

There really are ways we can learn how to live with less money... and likely need to. Going to the store keeps getting more expensive, and it's getting harder to live on the income that used to be enough. Here are some ideas to help you have more money each month.

## First priority is to get out of debt.

The first thing to focus on is getting out of debt. Start with those car payments or extra credit card payments that you have to make each month. If you can pay them off, you will have more money in your pocket. Dave Ramsey has a great program called Financial Peace University that can help with this. You can find more information about it with a quick Google search. You can also borrow his books from the library for free, or some local churches offer the program at no cost. Use any extra money you have each month to pay off your debts. Now, let's talk about how to get this extra money.



## How do I get this extra money? Trim the fat.

The first thing we need to do is think about **wants versus needs**. For example, think about any subscriptions you have, like subscription boxes, gaming subscriptions, or music subscriptions. Include streaming subscriptions like Netflix or Hulu. These are all for entertainment and not really necessary in our daily lives. You can easily cancel them.

## Cancel subscriptions.

Instead, you can use a local antenna for TV if you live in an urban apartment, or if you live in the country, you can use a rabbit ear TV antenna. You can watch local news channels or local broadcasting channels for free, even without the internet. You can also listen to the radio or use subscription services that offer discounts or are free but have commercials. Another option is to go back to using CDs or DVDs. You can rent current DVDs from the library. Lastly, if you really need a subscription service, I suggest rotating between services. For example, you can use Netflix for two months to watch a new series, and then switch to Hulu for the next two months. You can save money by only paying for one service at a time and canceling it before starting another.

Another way to cut expenses is to cancel your gym membership if you're not using it. Working out is good for our mental and physical health, but you don't have to go to a gym and spend extra money each month. Instead, you can run in your neighborhood, exercise at a park with equipment, or work out at home using a workout DVD or your own home gym. Some big corporations and health insurance plans may even help pay for your gym membership. If going to the gym is really important to you, you could consider working there to get a free membership.



Some people waste a lot of money on extra treats. It can be difficult to give up things like coffee, smoothies, ice cream, and protein shakes because they are tasty. However, they can be expensive, costing about \$8 to \$12 each. They only give you a short amount of satisfaction. Instead of spending money on these extras, you could use it for something more beneficial, like feeding your family for a whole day. You can easily make coffee and shakes at home or buy a big container of ice cream from the store for less than the price of a DQ Blizzard.

Another way to save money is by reducing your phone and Internet plans. You can switch to different companies to find savings. If you work for a big company, check if they have discounts with certain carriers. Switching to paying for the amount of data used instead of paying for unlimited Internet can cut your costs. Just remember to connect to Wi-Fi whenever possible. Another option is to cancel your home internet if you don't need it for work. You can do emails and other things on your phone. Consider going to a coffee shop or library with free Wi-Fi to do your work. This can save you around \$60 to \$80 per month on Internet costs.

### **Cook meals at home.**

Eating out is another big expense. It is much cheaper to cook meals at home instead of eating out at restaurants or picking up fast food. Let's say you order Chicken Alfredo Pasta at an average restaurant which is about \$16. You can decide to eat half and save the leftovers for lunch, which helps. Or you can make a similar meal at home for \$13, and it can feed 14 people with leftovers. That's 16 servings for \$13, compared to two servings for \$16! That's a lot of food for your money. If you do eat out, choose to only order water and avoid soda or alcohol. Save money also by looking for deals like kids eating free on Tuesdays or buy one get one free deals.

Another way to not waste your money is to consider not dyeing or treating your hair. You might think it looks beautiful, but you have to pay to maintain it every six to eight weeks. Go back to your natural hair color and take a break from the salon. Even home hair color kits still cost money and fall in the want versus need category.

### **Cut back on necessities.**

Some home saving tips include saving money by recycling. Instead of paying someone to pick up your garbage, recycling, or yard waste, you can bring it to the recycling center yourself. Heating and cooling costs can be expensive too. If there are rooms in your house that you don't use, consider closing them off. When it gets really cold, baking can help warm up the house. Also, remember to turn off the lights when you're not using them. Some appliances still use electricity even when they're not turned on, so unplug them if you're not using them. If you have an electric dryer, try line drying your clothes instead of using the dryer. You can also save money on electricity by using it during off-peak hours when the rates are cheaper.

To lower housing costs, see if you can temporarily move to a smaller apartment or consider living with roommates to share the expenses.



If you need to go to a laundromat, try washing your clothes in your bathtub as a cheaper option. If you don't have a bathtub, you can make your own washing machine using a 5-gallon bucket and a clean plunger.

When it comes to your car, consider downgrading to a cheaper car with lower payments which will also lower insurance rates - or try not having a car at all for a while. Instead, you can try biking, walking, taking public transportation, or carpooling. Try to consolidate all your errands to one day so you're not making multiple trips. It costs a lot to fill up a car with gas so avoid driving unnecessarily so you don't waste money.

It used to be common knowledge to change your own oil, wiper blades, and headlights. Today, many people just find it easier to have someone else do it all. Instead, try learning how to do these things yourself and have more money in your pocket.

Clothing can be another big expense when it doesn't have to be. Before shopping for new clothes or other items, clean out your closets. You

might find extra shirts, pants, or dresses that you forgot about. Shop at thrift stores, garage sales, or on Facebook marketplace. Keep your nice clothes separate from your comfy clothes so they last longer. Look for hand-me-downs for kids. Cloth diapers can be a good option because they save money in the long run, especially if you have more than one child.

On Facebook, you can join groups in your town where people offer things for free or ask for things they need. Instead of donating your extra stuff to a store, you can give it to people in your community.

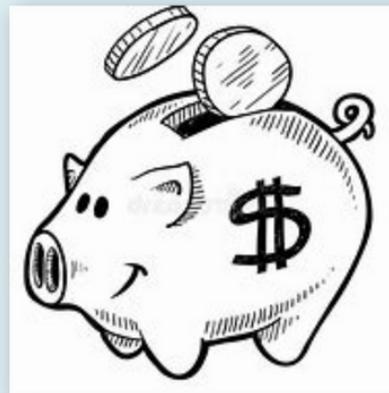
### **Don't throw - repurpose.**

Find ways to reuse items like old towels, T-shirts, and socks as cleaning rags instead of buying paper towels. Save gift bags and bows to use again. Wash and reuse Ziploc bags. Use grocery bags as trash liners.

When it comes to activities, consider free or low-cost options like going to the park, walking trails, or festivals. If you go to the movies, try going to a matinee or look for discounted days, and avoid buying drinks and snacks while there. Having drinks and food at home can help you avoid spending money on snacks at the grocery store or fast food for your kids. Plan cheaper activities with friends like game nights or potluck dinners instead of going to clubs or concerts. Take turns babysitting with friends if you need childcare for a date night out.

If you have something to offer, you can think about exchanging it for goods or services. Do you like to cook or bake? Are you good at cleaning houses? Do you have skills with vehicles? Using your skills in exchange for someone else's skills can really save money. For example, you could offer to babysit in exchange for getting your car fixed.

As much as possible, try to reduce your shopping. For gift giving, try to make homemade gifts. It can save you money in the long run. The library is a great resource for books, board games, or audio books that you can borrow or rent instead of buying at a store. Also, look for free options and events in your community. Just spending time with people is all you really need. You don't have to spend money to do that.



It's doesn't take much to go through a paycheck these days or pile up debt. Spending a little here and a little there really adds up. Be purposeful about your choices. You really can stretch your dollars by being willing to sacrifice and shop smart. Every penny saved is one step closer to being debt-free!



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

How can you apply the money-saving tips mentioned in the text to your own life?

2

What are some ways you can be mindful of your energy use at home?

3

What are some low-cost activities you can do with your friends or family?

4

What areas are the hardest for you - that you have the most trouble with spending or wasting money?

5

What are some creative ways you can reuse items instead of buying new ones? How can this help you save money?

6

How can you incorporate free or low-cost activities into your leisure time to save money?

7

What are some strategies you can use to avoid unnecessary spending and impulse purchases?

8

In what ways can you involve your friends or community in saving money together?