

No matter where you are on your financial journey, you can still turn your financial situation around. Sometimes all it takes is that first step in the right direction to get things moving in your favor. The most difficult part is often just getting started.

These 103 money saving suggestions can make a difference for you and your family. Some take just a few minutes, while others require a regular effort. But they are all simple to incorporate in your daily life.

Not all of these tips will apply to everyone. Go through the list and find 10 or 15 that apply to you, and then put them to work.

Cutting costs is a high priority for most Alabama families. These suggestions can help you save money and energy. Many may not apply to your situation, and you may already practice some of them. Read each one, and mark those that appeal to you—and start saving money today.

Save on Energy Costs

1. Heat and cool smartly. Improve the performance of your heating and cooling system by having it serviced annually by a licensed contractor.
2. Set your thermostat comfortably low in the winter and comfortably high in the summer. Install a programmable thermostat that is compatible with your heating and cooling system.
3. Use compact fluorescent light bulbs.
4. Air dry dishes instead of using your dishwasher's drying cycle.
5. Turn off your computer and monitor when not in use.
6. Plug home electronics, such as TVs and DVD players, into power strips. Turn the power strips off when the equipment is not in use. (TVs and DVDs in standby mode still use several watts of power).
7. Take short showers instead of baths.
8. Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes.
9. Take care of home repairs as soon as the need arises. Delay can make problems worse and repair costs higher.
10. Close the doors and turn off the heat or air conditioning to rooms that you are not using.
11. Look for the ENERGY STAR logo found on everything from compact fluorescent light bulbs to refrigerators. The logo indicates that a product is 10 to 50 percent more energy efficient than products without the ENERGY STAR logo.
12. Change your air filter. When it comes to improving the energy efficiency of your heating and cooling system, replacing a dirty air filter is probably the simplest, most inexpensive, and most often overlooked maintenance job.
13. Use energy saving window treatments, such as insulated or heavy draperies, and storm windows.



14. Use hot water wisely. Your water heater is the second largest energy user in your home. Consider insulating it and using hot water efficiently to save energy and money. Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 120 degrees F.



Save on Transportation

15. Keep your car in good running condition. It will be safer and will cost less to operate.
16. Walk more, drive less. You will save on transportation costs and improve your health.
17. Learn how to do some of your own car maintenance chores. Change the oil, oil filters, and air filters.
18. Form a car pool to go to work, to meetings, and even on shopping trips.
19. Ask yourself each time you get in your car, Is this trip really necessary?
20. Make things-to-do and things-to-buy lists before leaving home. Forgetting something and having to make a second trip is costly.



Save on Clothing

21. Study your wardrobe, determine your needs, work out a clothing budget, and stay within it. When buying clothes, consider the cost per wear, calculated by the cost/number of times worn.
22. Know how to spot a bargain. When you buy a garment, check its construction and care instructions, fiber content, and other label information. Be sure the garment will last and is easy to care for.
23. Buy designs that will stay in style. Purchase a few color-coordinated solid pieces that can take you from season to season with just a few add-ons to mix and match. Buy the best quality you can afford.
24. Buy wash and wear garments as much as possible. Clothes that require dry cleaning are expensive to care for.
25. Choose clothes with simple trim; they will stay in style longer. Trim should be good quality and require the same care as the rest of the garment.
26. Shop thrift stores, yard sales, and factory outlets for bargains—surplus, samples, discontinued lines.

27. Update your wardrobe with accessories that can add a new look for a much smaller cost than purchasing new outfits.
28. When you are no longer wearing an item, exchange with friends and relatives or recycle.
29. Contribute clothing to a thrift store sponsored by a charitable organization. Ask for a receipt, and use it as a charitable contribution for tax purposes.
30. Organize a clothing swap with friends. Everyone brings clothes they want to get rid of and trades for items others have brought.
31. Take good care of your clothing and shoes. They will last longer.



Save in the Home

32. Look carefully at your phone bill. Are you paying for unnecessary features? If you have both a landline and a cell phone, you might want to cancel one of the services.
33. Use fewer paper products, such as paper plates, cups, and towels. You will be both saving money and helping the environment.
34. Strive for a simpler lifestyle. This means owning fewer nonessential things and having less to clean and maintain. Buy less clutter and junk.
35. Be creative. Use what you already have in new and better ways.
36. Cut your recreation costs by planning more activities and games at home.

“Be creative. Use what you have in new and better ways.”

37. Entertain friends and relatives at home.
38. Before purchasing gifts at a retail store, think about your talents with crafts, baking, making jelly, etc. Make gifts for friends and family.
39. Take clippings from some of your plants, and pot them for gifts.
40. Plan carefully and thoroughly as the first step in economical decorating.
41. Consider remodeling rather than building a new house.
42. Learn to paint and hang wallpaper.
43. Learn to refinish furniture.

44. Make your own draperies, curtains, spreads, slipcovers, and table covers.
45. Learn to clean, repair, and restore household items yourself. Learn to maintain and repair the house and equipment.
46. Make dried flower arrangements from garden flowers, wildflowers, and decorative weeds.
47. Decorate your home with items from nature or use family creations.
48. Take advantage of free or low-cost learning opportunities, trips, and community services, such as schools, workshops, fairs, libraries, concerts, hikes, public tennis courts, home shows, Extension programs, and other adult education courses.
49. Hold a garage sale. Sell those items you no longer use, need, or want.
50. Plan an outdoor living area. Landscape to beautify and enjoy it.
51. Buy things that require as little maintenance as possible.
52. Buy furniture at auctions, secondhand shops, or garage sales.
53. Buy low-cost household cleaning products or learn to make your own.



61. Prepare some of your own convenience foods, master mixes, and desserts at home.
62. Prepare a large quantity of standard recipes, such as spaghetti sauce, chili, pastries, and stews. Label and freeze them for later use. This not only saves time but also allows you to buy larger amounts of basic ingredients at lower prices.
63. Waste less! Each year Alabamians throw many dollars worth of food into garbage cans. This happens not only at home but also in restaurants and school cafeterias.
64. Eat less expensive food; drink less expensive beverages.
65. Entertain with potluck dinners or inexpensive buffets, such as lasagna and salad.
66. Always eat before grocery shopping to avoid impulse buying.
67. Try limiting food shopping trips to once a week. You will save gasoline, time, and money.
68. Remember to use the microwave, toaster oven, and crock pot. These appliances are more energy efficient than your large oven.
69. Buy fresh fruits and vegetables at the local farmers market. Buy in season.
70. Grow your own fruits and vegetables. Can, freeze, and dry them for future use.

Save on Food

54. Feed your family based on recommendations from Dietary Guidelines for American and MyPlate. Keep them healthy and you'll save on medical bills.
55. Plan your meals one week at a time. First, review the grocery ads to take advantage of specials. Make a shopping list from your menu plan. You can save hundreds of dollars a year by comparing cost per unit on shelf labels. Stock up on those items with low per-unit costs, and take your calculator.
56. Plan one meatless day per week.
57. Grow your own fruits and vegetables in containers if you do not have room for a garden. You also don't have to wonder about what pesticides or herbicides are in the fruits and vegetables you grow yourself.
58. When you use the oven, try to cook more than one item while the oven is hot. Cook the main dish, vegetables, quick breads, dessert, or other foods at the same time.
59. Stretch ground meat with breadcrumbs, oatmeal, or tomato sauce.
60. Mix one part nonfat dry milk with one part regular milk. The family will never know the difference.

Save on Children's Expenses

71. Look for bargains on children's clothes and make necessary alterations yourself.
72. Use good-quality fabrics, buttons, and trims from out-of-style adult clothes to make clothing for children.

73. Shop for children's clothes at discount stores.
74. Select children's clothes that are functional and comfortable.
75. Teach children to properly care for clothing, toys, furniture, and equipment to minimize replacement, repair, and maintenance costs.
76. Involve children in understanding their environment. Reward them for conserving resources.
77. Save household items that children can play with—egg cartons, meat trays, old stockings, and cardboard boxes of all sizes. Clean items first.
78. Devise creative, inexpensive entertainment for children.
79. Interest children in budgeting their money. Give them allowances, and have them experience spending, saving, and sharing their own money.
80. Start a child care pool with a group of friends to save babysitting fees.
81. Buy basic gifts or supplies when prices are reduced, such as after holidays, and save them for the following seasons.
82. Insist that children do some type of work, besides regular chores, as soon as they are old enough.
83. Involve children in gardening.
92. Know how much money you have, and plan your spending.
93. Don't spend tomorrow's paycheck today.
94. Be sure the time is right for the best price. Often, it is not what you buy but when you buy it.
95. Learn the principles for cutting family living costs. Learn, practice, and develop skills in the marketplace, in wisely using credit, in being thrifty, and in using financial institutions.
96. Substitute other resources for money. Learn to barter, share, switch, substitute, simplify, and conserve goods and services.
97. Establish a safe level of credit.
98. Set aside a realistic emergency fund equal to 3- to 6-months of take-home pay.
99. Shop for credit just as you shop for merchandise. Consider the cost of credit part of the cost of the item you are buying. Know the annual percentage rate as well as the cost of credit in dollars and cents.
100. Shop sales carefully. A seasonal sale may save 10 to 25 percent; a clearance sale may save 50 to 75 percent. Consider the actual savings in dollars and cents.
101. Remember, if you don't need it, it is not a good buy at any price.
102. Recycle. It will save money and reduce landfill space.
103. Check with your county Extension office for other money saving ideas or visit www.aces.edu.



Save on General Living Expenses

84. Distinguish between needs and wants. Consider values, goals, and resources.
85. Explore alternatives for increasing income.
86. Know how much things cost, and then do comparison shopping.
87. Know when to use cash, check, or credit.
88. Beware of little expenses. Ben Franklin, American author, diplomat, inventor, physicist, and politician said, "A small leak will sink a great ship."
89. Shop with a list, and don't buy on impulse. If you see something you really want that you didn't plan to buy, think about it overnight before making your decision to purchase.
90. Follow proven buying guidelines. Consider price per unit, and watch weights and measures. Check your sales slips and count your change.
91. Pay promptly. Don't build up interest charges for late payments.



Ruth Brock, *Regional Extension Agent*. Originally prepared by Jo Turner, former *Extension Specialist*. Adapted from "100 Ways to Save Money" by the Mississippi Extension Service.

For more information, contact your county Extension office. Visit www.aces.edu/directory.

Published by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University), an equal opportunity educator and employer.

Revised August 2015, HE-0562

© 2015 by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved.

www.aces.edu