



## **Tool** Three Ways to Budget

**The goal** Every Christian has the capacity to handle money in a way that glorifies God, because God has rescued us from the dominion of money being our master! If we want to continue to submit to God and not money, we have to be willing to look it in the eye and tell it where to go despite our fears. Here are tips to get started and three ways you might be able to begin budgeting—with options for everyone from the number savvy to those who avoid math at all costs.

### **Tips for every budget**

1. Commit to seek God's honor and glory through your budget and your use of money.
2. Include giving in your budget plan. Don't just plan on charity leftovers.
3. If you have debts, make attacking them a budget priority.
4. If budgeting is new to you, be patient. You'll need a few months to figure out how much you need to budget for food, gas, and clothing.
5. Try a zero-based budget. Tell every dollar whether it goes to giving, saving, or spending.
6. If you're married, agree together on where your money will go. Not just lip service, but really agree. The battle shouldn't be with your spouse, but with the people trying to detour your goals.
7. Try using envelopes and cash for items you have difficulty controlling, like restaurant lunches.
8. Pocket money for that impulse coffee can be a budget item. Just decide that it is important to you when you weigh out your priorities.
9. Build up some kind of emergency savings, or the first car repair (or other emergency) will discourage you and make you want to quit.
10. Let your close friends in Christ know that you are starting to budget, so they can encourage you through the storms and pray with you.
11. Keep these percentages in mind when planning how much of your income will go toward certain costs: Saving 10-15%, Housing 25-35%, Utilities 5-10%, Food 5-15%, Transportation 10-15%. More percentage advice is on the spreadsheet in Approach #2, but these are the basics.

### **Approach # 1: Apps and Computer Programs**

There are several programs designed to help you manage money more easily through technology, and each has different benefits. Try one for a month and see if it works for you. If not, try another! Here are some choices and their benefits. All are wonderful at keeping track of your monthly budget, but vary in extra features.

*Quicken:* Widely regarded as the most reliable and comprehensive personal finance tool, Quicken is computer software (that can be used through mobile applications as well) that you purchase. The primary advantages unique to Quicken are the ability to pay bills through the platform, plan for retirement, and keep information locally on a computer.

*Mint:* The most feature-rich, completely free money management tool is Mint, a website and phone app. This is most popular for those who want to manage all of their finances well in the most simple, fast, affordable way, but who don't feel they need the "next level" of Quicken.

*Every Dollar:* Every Dollar is a website and phone app for those who primarily want to work on handling their monthly budget without other frills. It is free to use, or can be synced with your bank accounts for a fee. This app is not meant to manage a person's entire financial portfolio, but it can be a wonderful way to apply a budget to daily spending.

## **Approach # 2: Spreadsheet**

[The attached spreadsheet](#) is just an electronic version of the budget form from Dave Ramsey's "Financial Peace University" course. It lists main categories of giving, saving, and spending, and can remind you to save towards periodic repeating expenses like car repairs and Christmas gifts. Note that giving and saving are at the top of the list. It also shows some reasonable percentage ranges for each category. Your budget needs to match your income, so you can't be on the high side of all recommended ranges.

In his budgeting lesson, Dave has a few ground rules. The first rule is "Keep at it!" It might take three months for you to get the kinks worked out. Another rule is "Spend every dollar on paper." It is not an accomplishment to have more income than planned destinations for your dollars. Tell any extra money to go to something you think is important. Finally, if you are married, you need to agree on the budget together. It isn't a weapon to use against each other. One person may be a number-cruncher and the other a free spirit, but the beauty in marriage comes from both being of one mind, reflecting the perfect unity of the Trinity.

For more tips on making a zero-based budget, read <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/how-to-make-a-zero-based-budget>.

## **Approach # 3: Conversation**

If diving into a spreadsheet or software package is intimidating, meet up with a Christian brother or sister and discuss your income and spending, as advised in Proverbs 11:14. All you need is an understanding of your paycheck and monthly bills. You can pray and discuss your goals and lay out a simple written plan. Then next month you can discuss where you succeeded and where you can improve. You can keep meeting monthly for as long as it is helpful!

## **Remember**

A budget won't work if you don't make one or if you don't follow it.