



PacificDebtInc

Back To School Budget Basics

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Back To School Budget Basics Can Help You Make The Grade



As another new school year approaches, the child in your life might begin expressing a 'need' for designer clothes, elaborate school supplies, up-to-the-minute electronics and pricey sporting equipment. As a parent, it is important to help your children learn the value of a dollar. Here are a few money saving ideas that just might please both you and your child.

Supplies. Before purchasing anything, you could first check to see if there are any items on your child's school supply list that you already have.



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Items from last year such as rulers, pencil boxes, calculators and backpacks can be reused if they are in good shape. Check your junk drawer for extra pens and pencils.

Even if you reuse some things, it is likely that you will need to purchase a few key items. Try to remember that dollar stores offer a variety of back to school supplies at a very affordable cost.

Once you get to the store, try not to become distracted by fun items such as colored gel pens, locker accessories and self-stick notes. Although a unique extra might be fun once in a while if your budget allows, try to stress to your child the importance of purchasing necessities.

If you have a pre-school or elementary age child, you may want to give them a list and, as you shop with them, allow them to check off items as they make their selections. At the same time, try to stress to your child that he/she must obtain approval from you to purchase each item they pick.

Clothing. As children approach the teen years shopping may become more challenging. Your child might begin insisting on more independence, costlier merchandise and more luxury items instead of necessities. When it

comes to clothing, consignment shops and gently used apparel resale stores can come in handy. Try to find stores in your area that carry gently-used teen apparel. Many of these stores carry designer labels and brands at a fraction of the cost.

Plato's Closet, a national franchise resale shop that buys and sells teen apparel, specializes in designer brands such as Hollister Co. and Abercrombie & Fitch. Visit www.PlatosCloset.com for a store near you.



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In addition to offering stylish clothes for less expensive prices, consignment shops may also take your teen's clothes and turn them into cash upon resale.

Prior to shopping, you might want to establish a dollar amount with your child. This could give your teen a chance to express his or her individuality by choosing what they like. It may also help them learn how to manage a particular amount of cash on their own. When spending

an allotted amount of money themselves they may find that items they swore they couldn't live without when a parent was paying may not be as important as they thought.

At the end of every season, try to shop at all the sales and purchase things that will fit your child next year. Consider encouraging your child to watch for coupons and sale days at their favorite stores.

Sporting Equipment. Participating in school sports could produce great results for your child. However, parents are sometimes burdened with bills for costly equipment and transportation fees.

Stores like Play-It-Again-Sports allow you to turn in your used sporting goods for credit towards new purchases. Also, be sure to take advantage of fund raising opportunities to help offset costs for sporting events.



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Take Advantage Of Tax-Free Holidays



Many states offer tax-free holidays around the start of the school year.

Shopping on the right day could take as much as 10 percent off of your back to school tab. Electronic equipment and hurricane preparedness items may also be eligible for discounts.

Here is a partial listing of individual sales tax "holidays". For a full listing, go to the Federation of Tax Administrators home page

at www.TaxAdmin.org and search 'Tax Free Holidays'.

Alabama:	August 5 - 7
Florida:	August 12 - 14
Iowa:	August 5 - 6
Maryland:	August 14 - 20
Missouri:	August 4 - 6
New Mexico:	August 5 - 7
North Carolina:	August 5 - 7
Texas:	August 19 - 21
Virginia:	August 5 - 7

Take Proactive Steps To Overcome Financial Setbacks



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Sometimes it takes just one unexpected setback or emergency to trigger a debt crisis.

It is normal for some people to have feelings of loss and doubt after a less-than-positive life experience. However, it is important to move ahead and find ways to get back on your feet again. Here are a few tips on how to stay proactive if life throws you a curve.

Natural Disasters. Your local branch of the American Red Cross could provide you with basic needs such as food and clothing immediately following a disaster. Visit www.RedCross.org for more information. In addition, The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers many assistance programs to those affected by disasters. Visit www.FEMA.gov and click on “Apply for Assistance” to learn more about the program.



It would be wise to make a list of all relevant numbers and contact information. This should include checking, savings and credit cards numbers, as well as insurance policy numbers.

If possible, invest in a fireproof lock box where you could store this list along with copies of important documents such as your driver’s license, social security card and insurance policies. It is a good idea to keep everything filed and organized in case you need to get to the information quickly.

Losing A Job. If this happens to you, keep in mind that you are not alone. Many good workers are losing jobs in the current economy. You could begin taking action by visiting the Department of Labor at www.Dol.gov (866-487-2365) to learn more about unemployment benefits and to search lists of unemployment offices according to state. Also, you could review your employer’s severance benefits, including the temporary continuation of your health insurance under COBRA.

Regarding health insurance, you might qualify for the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC). Go to www.Irs.gov and do a key word search for HCTC for more information and to see if you are eligible.

A Medical Emergency. Since mistakes can happen, it might be wise to review all doctor and hospital bills and insurance claim payments/denials. If you find a discrepancy on your bill and cannot resolve the dispute with a doctor, hospital or insurer, you might want to contact your state consumer protection office or insurance regulator for guidance.

Try to keep all bills, cancelled checks or other receipts in one place so you know where they are for tax time for your tax preparer in the event you may qualify for tax savings.

Death Of A Family Member. Try to locate important documents, such as insurance policies, as well as an original copy of the most recent will. It is a good idea to make multiple copies of the death certificate, which will be needed to apply for death benefits (such as through life insurance policies or Social Security) and to access bank and other accounts.

Divorce. Failing to downsize after divorce could lead to debt. You may have to consider making some important financial changes. When it comes to spending, recognize that living your old lifestyle may not be possible on one salary.

According to www.Kiplinger.com, you should update your will and the list of beneficiaries you designate on life insurance policies. Try visiting www.FamilyLawSoftware.com for information about the divorce process. You can view ‘The Divorce Guide: A World Of Help’ when you click the link under the ‘For Individuals Facing Divorce’ tab.

*Thank you for giving back our lives. A huge
burden has been lifted from our shoulders; We
have learned if you can't pay cash, you don't need it...*

– Janice L., former client

Inexpensive Ideas Can Brighten Home And Garden

Now that summer is in full swing you may find yourself looking for extra funds to do some home and garden improvements. Unfortunately, home improvement projects can be very expensive, even if you do it yourself. To save money you might want to consider the warm weather suggestions below for transforming your home into an outdoor paradise.

Perform Simple Cleaning Tasks.

Weeding and trimming bushes and trees may make your yard look a little neater. Consider other outdoor projects such as cleaning gutters and washing the outside of windows as well as any siding. To clean aluminum or vinyl siding, use a soft, long-handled brush and cold water. Start from the top to avoid streaking and rinse with garden hose.

Start A Garden Club. Designate one day each week to tend to each member's garden. Spend the day planting, weeding and doing basic yard maintenance. You

could trade plants or seeds with each other to cut the costs of buying everything yourself. In a few short weeks, you may be enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables, while saving money on produce. Gardening is great exercise, too!

Space Savers. If you do not have the yard space for a garden, a small indoor herb garden can be just as rewarding. You could plant seeds and watch them grow or buy small plants and transfer to a pot or window box. Herbs do well indoors and are great to incorporate into meals instead of paying top dollar at the grocery store. Hanging plants are also an option for those with little yard space.

A Touch Of Color. A new color on the porch could spruce up your home's exterior.

Or, give your interior a new look with a fresh coat of paint in a pretty color. Try shopping at home improvement stores for paint returned or rejected because the color was not what the buyer expected. These cans are usually sold at a fraction of the cost.



Water Saving Tips

Maintaining your lawn and garden may require you to use a lot of water. Below are some ways in which you may conserve water and reduce your water bill.

- Try not to pour water down the drain that can be reused for another purpose such as watering plants or a garden.
- You should water the lawn when temperatures are low and evaporation is less likely, such as early in the morning. Lawns only need to be watered every 5-7 days.
- You could place a shut-off nozzle on your garden hose to control the flow of water or use a timer with any sprinkler system.
- Consider using a broom to sweep driveways or sidewalks rather than using a garden hose which could waste hundreds of gallons of water.



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Inspiring Thoughts



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You have probably heard the phrase "Everyone makes mistakes" at some point in your life.

It's true...everyone does make mistakes. However, you can learn from them and deal with the results of your mistakes in a constructive and effective way. To do this you could begin viewing the world and your experiences with a fresh, youthful outlook.

Try to remember when you were a child and you were learning how to ride a bike. When you fell off you probably got right back up and kept trying until you were successful. Learning to ride a bike was an important step toward independence and you weren't going to let a few bumps and scrapes get in your way, right?

In order to learn a valuable lesson, you should keep trying. You may want to experiment with new approaches to your dilemmas so you don't repeat the same mistakes. For example, you may regret getting into debt and considered it to be a big mistake. However, dwelling on the past will not solve your current problems. Remember that if nobody ever made a mistake, society would not grow and prosper.

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young."

- Henry Ford

For example, if you acquired debt due to overspending, use this time to build a better budget plan or learn about more prudent credit card use. Therefore, when it comes time to re-establish your credit, you will know not to make the same mistakes again. Try not to get discouraged or feel critical of yourself. Forgive yourself - you aren't the only one who has made a mistake.

On the other hand, if your debt was the result of an unforeseen circumstance such as a family illness or job loss, recognize that almost everyone experiences setbacks at least once during the course of their life. In the midst of an unfortunate circumstance, you did what you needed to do in order to survive. Once you complete your settlement program, you

may consider starting an emergency fund in case an unanticipated event should occur again in the future.

Regardless of the reasons for your debt, realize that enrolling in a debt settlement program is one way to rectify your economic situation. Commend yourself for taking this positive step towards improving your finances. Although you may be currently faced with debt, you have decided to take action. In the end, you may become a stronger person because you learned from your mistakes.

Most importantly, try taking time out to be kind to yourself. Do something fun that makes you feel lighthearted. Rejoice in knowing that although you may have a few bumps and bruises now, it is possible to heal. Staying young at heart may help you view things with a fresh, optimistic perspective. You can continue to grow and enlighten others around you in the process.

Spare Change



Tips For Finding Scholarships During Summer Months

If you plan to go to college, the summer months might be the right time to plan ahead when it comes to scholarship opportunities. Here are a few tips:

Do Your Research. Applicants should always be on the lookout for good scholarship opportunities and be aware of any deadlines taking place



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during the summer. In addition, it would be wise for scholarship hopefuls to get involved with extra-curricular activities and community services that could help make applications more appealing to the individuals who are making the decisions.

Stay One Step Ahead. It is a good idea to review all of the necessary details in the beginning of your application process. Scheduling enough time to complete your application accurately could help you avoid mistakes.

Cover All Bases. Check into renewable scholarships which usually come directly from the college but may be offered through a specific academic department.

You may also want to check out Scholarship America, a non-profit, private-sector scholarship and educational support organization.

If you've worked as a golf caddie, enjoy continued participation in the International Star Trek Fan Association or belong to a chapter of Tall Clubs International (TCI), go to www.ScholarshipAmerica.org. You may discover that you qualify for unique scholarship opportunities that you didn't even know existed!

Send A 'Thank You' Note. Writing a personal letter or note of thanks for every scholarship you receive adds a personal touch and shows your appreciation.

Save Money, Go Green With Summer Energy Use Tips

There are plenty of ways to save money this summer when it comes to energy usage.

- Try to set your thermostat higher than 78 degrees. Also remember to check your air filters for build-up which could prevent air from moving through the filter freely, increasing your energy bill.

- Make sure windows and doors are sealed. Run ceiling fans to help circulate the air throughout the day or night. Be sure to set your ceiling fan in the direction that pushes air down toward you, not up toward the ceiling.

- Fix leaky faucets, shut off water when brushing your teeth and take shorter showers of five minutes or less.

- Instead of using the oven, maximize your use of smaller kitchen appliances that won't heat up the whole house, like a crock pot, electric skillet, toaster oven and microwave.

- For more green energy saving tips go to the United States Department of Energy website at www.EnergySavers.gov and click on the 'Tips' tab.



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919 4th Ave. Suite 2500
San Diego CA 92101
1-877-PCA-DEBT

PacificDebtInc