



Take Charge of Your Cash

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Keeping a handle on your finances while in college can be challenging, but it is possible to avoid the label of a “poor college student.”

Living independently with limited resources is the perfect time to establish good spending, saving and giving habits. It is tempting to spend your entire paycheck the weekend you receive it, but this is where the element of saving can be applied. Even if you don't have a specific purchase in mind, it's still smart to save for future expenses, such as unexpected car problems.

How you set the percentages for dividing your paycheck into spending, saving and giving depends on your expenses. If you are saving for a large item, such as a car, you may decide to save more than you spend. Spending 40 percent and saving 50 percent is an appropriate suggestion. The remaining 10 percent can be set aside for charitable giving.

Opening a checking account gives you the ideal opportunity to manage your cash. A checkbook provides an immediate figure of how much money you have to spend. Balancing it at every purchase is the key.

Another easy way to keep record of your expenditures is by saving receipts. Purchases with-

out receipts, such as the late night pizza you ordered, may be jotted down in a notebook. Each month evaluate your spending habits. Did you really need to eat out when your meal plan covered dinner in the cafeteria? If your allotted spending money is largely spent on gasoline, car-pooling with friends may be a solution to help you save.

Map Out a Money Plan

Credit card companies know the temptation they provide to college students and aggressively throw their pitch at them. College is the perfect training ground to learn how to manage your money. Use your time wisely and build good credit, instead of accumulating bad credit.

Rule No. 1: The best deal is to not buy anything. Is it something you really need? Often bargain shoppers get excited if they save 40 percent on a shirt. That's great - if you really need a shirt. But you'll save 100 percent if you simply don't buy it.

Rule No. 2: Shop around and check out what the Internet has to offer. You may find you save hundreds of dollars just by shopping around. Check online to buy used books. Your college bookstore may not offer you the lowest price.

Rule No. 3: Do your homework. Before applying for a credit card, research the plan that is being offered. Often

the “savings” or “free” items being offered are not what they appear to be.

Rule No. 4: Coupons are not just for moms. Deals such as “buy-one-get-one-free” can help you save.

Rule No. 5: Don't carry around large amounts of cash. You will be more prone to impulsive buying if you have the cash within your reach.

Before you empty your wallet at the mall, reconsider if this is a purchase you really need to make. Oftentimes, if we have the cash in our hand, we assume we can afford to spend it. However, with self-control and careful planning, you can afford to buy not only things you need, but also things you want. 🛒

