

MONEY SAVING MOM®'S 7 RULES FOR FINANCIAL SUCCESS

RULE #1: SET BIG GOALS AND BREAK THEM DOWN INTO BITE-SIZED PIECES

Month 1

Action points: Brainstorm three goals and break them down into yearly, monthly, and weekly goals; set up monthly Goal Accountability Meetings.

RULE #2: STREAMLINE YOUR LIFE AND CUT THE CLUTTER

Month 2

Action points: Create a Personal Priorities List, implement a Time Budget, go through your house from top to bottom.

RULE #3: SET UP A REALISTIC, WORKABLE BUDGET

Months 3, 4, and 5

Action point: Take the Three-Month Budget Challenge.

RULE #4: TAKE THE CASH-ONLY CHALLENGE

Months 6, 7, and 8

Action points: Cut up your credit and debit cards (or stick them in the freezer!) and take the Cash-Only Challenge.

RULE #5: USE COUPONS

Months 9 and 10

Action points: Start collecting and organizing coupons, begin menu planning based upon what's on sale at the store and what you have on hand, practice the Buy-Ahead Principle, become an advanced couponer, try your hand at other ways of lowering your grocery bill.

RULE #6: NEVER PAY RETAIL

Month 11

Action points: Look for creative ways to cut costs on items you need or want to purchase; find ways to have fun—on a dime.

RULE #7: CHOOSE CONTENTMENT

Month 12

Action points: Make a Gratitude List; stop comparing yourself to others; become a giver; choose to bloom where you're planted.



FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT CLUTTER

1. **Do I need this item?** *Need* is the keyword here. If you could live without the item, then you probably don't. I'm not saying you should only have two outfits and one pair of shoes, but objectively considering how much of the stuff you have is truly essential can help change your perspective.
2. **Do I use this item regularly?** If you use something only once every six months, get rid of it. Christmas decorations are exempt, but if you have a food dehydrator lurking in a basement corner that you've only used once in the last ten years, you either need to pull it out and start using it or find a better home for it—preferably someone *else's* home.
3. **Do I like this item?** Sometimes it is easy to keep clutter just because we always have. It becomes a part of our home without us ever examining whether it is a useful part or something we like and use. If it's doing nothing for you and you don't even like it in the first place, pitch it!
4. **Is this item taking up space I don't have?** Many people feel like they need a bigger home for all their stuff, but most people just need less stuff. When my husband and I first got married, we spent the first six months living in a one-bedroom apartment with one closet. We made use of all our available room, from under the bed to under the bathroom sink, and learned an invaluable lesson: the less space you have, the less stuff you need.




5. **Could I bless someone else with this item?** One of my favorite ways to “dispose” of items I no longer love, need, or use is to share them with someone who will! Not only do I get the item off my hands, but I bless someone else in the process—and likely save them money, too! Now, I am not advocating that you go dump ten bags of junk on your friend’s doorstep, but if you know your friend could use some diapers and you have half a box that your son outgrew, stop letting them take up space in the nursery and ask your friend if she’d like them!



THREE WAYS TO TURN YOUR CLUTTER INTO CASH

Craigslist: If you live in a large metropolis, your local Craigslist is likely hopping with potential buyers. Take good pictures, use descriptive words, include only your email address (there are weirdos on the internet; no need to give them your home phone number!), and price your item reasonably. Chances are, finding a buyer will be fairly simple. Best of all? If the item doesn't sell, you're out nothing but time and effort. Craigslist is a great place to sell almost *anything*, but I'd especially recommend using it for selling exercise equipment, appliances, and baby items.



eBay: eBay may be a great option, but it is so well known that the market is often saturated. Before listing items on eBay, do a search to see if an item you are considering selling on eBay is actually *selling*. If there are dozens of listings of your item and very few bids, you're probably going to do better selling your item elsewhere.

I have had success with selling items as “lots” as opposed to individually. This is a quick way to get rid of many items at once. It will save you the time and energy of taking pictures and listing each thing separately and you'll likely get more bidders. Make sure that you do have a few hot sellers in the lot, use descriptive keywords in your title and listing, and include at least one or two high-quality photos of your items.

Consignment Stores: Consignment stores normally specialize in selling name-brand used clothing. Children's consignment stores also sell baby items, maternity clothes, toys, and more. There are at least one or two available in most areas. All consignment stores have their own rules and guidelines, but most either pay you upfront in cash or in store credit. Or they'll display the items in their store and then pay you a percentage of the selling price if your item sells.

Depending on the items, condition, and brand, this could be an excellent opportunity. I'd recommend calling around to local consignment stores to see what their rules and guidelines for accepting items are and how much they pay.



FIVE WAYS BEING ORGANIZED SAVES YOU MONEY

1. You'll be able to plan a weekly menu and you'll already have the ingredients on hand so that you're not scrambling to figure out something for dinner at the last minute. This saves you time, sanity, and countless unnecessary trips through the drive-through lane.
2. You'll be able to buy gifts for upcoming birthdays and holidays when you find a great deal online or in-store instead of waiting until the last minute and having to buy something at full price. As an added benefit, you'll likely be able to put more time and thought into a meaningful gift rather than just throwing something together at the last minute.
3. You'll have the time to clip coupons and buy extras of items when they are free or at rock-bottom prices, potentially saving you hundreds of dollars each month on your grocery bill.
4. You'll be able to plan ahead and pay bills on time and return DVDs to the movie store and books to the library so that you avoid late fees and overdue fines.
5. You can find what you own. This saves you a lot of time looking for misplaced items, plus it keeps you from spending money to replace items you can't find.

1. Write down all of your monthly expenses using the list below as a guide. If you don't know an exact amount, give an educated guess.

Ideas for Budget Categories

Charitable Gifts

Savings

Emergency Fund

Retirement Fund

College Fund

House Fund

Car Fund

Baby Fund

Housing

- Mortgage/Rent
- Real Estate Taxes
- Homeowner's/Renter's Insurance
- Repairs/Remodeling

Utilities

- Electricity
- Water
- Gas
- Landline Phone
- Cell Phone
- Trash
- Cable
- Internet

Food/Household Items

- Groceries
- Eating Out
- Household Products/Toiletries
- Cosmetics

Transportation

- Car Payment #1
- Car Payment #2
- Gas
- Repairs
- Car Insurance
- License and Taxes

Health and Medical

Disability Insurance

Health Insurance

Life Insurance

Doctor's Visits

Dental Work

Optometrist

Contacts/Glasses

Medications

Debt

Credit Card #1

Credit Card #2

Credit Card #3

Line of Credit

Student Loan #1

Student Loan #2

Other

Personal/Recreation

Clothing

Child Care/Babysitting

Hair Care

Education

School Tuition/Supplies

Subscriptions

Gifts

Miscellaneous

Vacation



SKIP PIZZA DELIVERY AND MAKE YOUR OWN!

One simple and extremely delicious way to save money is to skip ordering pizza for your family and make your own. If you're anything like us, you'll probably never go back to frozen or restaurant pizza again! Truth be told, we've ordered pizza only two times in all nine years of our marriage, and we both agree that homemade pizza is so much better! Here's my favorite pizza dough recipe:

Homemade Pizza

Pizza Crust

- 1 Tbsp. active dry yeast
- 1 cup warm water (105° to 115° F.)
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2½ cups flour



Dissolve the yeast in the water. Add the rest of the ingredients in and mix. Dump onto a floured surface. Knead into a smooth dough (five minutes or so). Roll out and press down onto a greased pizza pan. Add toppings of your choice. Have fun and be creative with this. The possibilities are practically endless! Our favorite variety is salsa or barbecue sauce, diced cooked chicken, and cheese. Bake at 450° F. for around 12 to 15 minutes until the crust looks crispy and lightly browned.

APPENDIX

10 TIPS FOR HAVING A SUCCESSFUL GARAGE SALE

1. Collect Clutter Year-Round

I mentioned in chapter 2 that we have an ongoing garage sale stash. When I come upon something we no longer need or use, and I don't know anyone to pass it on to, I stick it in a box in our garage. Once a box fills up, I start another. Without much effort at all, by the time it's the month of our annual garage sale, I usually have at least eight to ten boxes of stuff collected.

2. Have a Plan

A successful garage sale does not happen without organization. Two weeks before the sale, I go through my home from top to bottom and clear out clutter. Two to three days before the sale, I take an afternoon to price everything and organize it. And then the day before the sale, I devote a few hours to final organization, posting an ad on Craigslist, and getting the cash and signs together. Do not wait until the last minute to pull off a garage sale. Either it will flop or you'll run yourself ragged—or both.

3. Team Up

I always find friends or family to team up with when I do garage sales. Not only does this arrangement mean you have more stuff to sell and greater variety in sizes and items—it also means you have more help. Divvying up the responsibilities between three or four people makes a garage sale much more manageable. Plus, it just makes it more fun when you're doing it with friends and family!

4. Location, Location, Location!

If you don't live near a busy intersection, find a friend or relative who will let you host your sale at their home. There's no point in having a sale in an out-of-the-way location.

5. Timing Is Everything

Find out what days of the week are best for yard sales in your area. When we lived in Kansas City, I found people usually held sales on Friday and Saturday. However, where we live now, Thursdays are a big yard sale day and seem to garner the most traffic.

6. Mark Your Prices Clearly

It's easy to want to stick a big sign on a table saying that everything is a quarter, but in the long run it is much more efficient to put price stickers on everything. Instead of you having to make up prices on the spot, people will know exactly how much something is. In addition, some people are too shy to ask the price of an item, so you'll lose a sale if an item isn't marked.

7. Price Things to Sell

When I go to a garage sale, I expect to pay yard sale prices. Unless something is brand-new with the tags on, I am not going to pay more than a few quarters for it. When I am pricing my own items to sell, I always try to price things at what I feel would be a good bargain if I were buying the item at someone else's garage sale. I'd rather price something on the low end and have someone actually buy my item than to have twenty-five people pick up the item and put it back down on the table because it is too expensive.

8. Advertise Well

The marketing of your sale is usually the number-one factor in how well it does. You can have great items, great prices, and a great location, but if you don't tell people how to get there, they won't find it on their own. Make a number of quality, clearly readable signs with arrows that you put in conspicuous places to easily lead to your home. The brighter, bolder, and bigger the sign, the better.

Post a well-written ad on Craigslist the day before the sale and then repost a revised ad each day of the sale. Include specific items, brands, and sizes in your ad so that when people search for items on Craigslist, if they are looking for what you're selling—even if they aren't looking at garage sales—your item will pull up in searches for them.

9. Mark Things Down on the Last Day

Things are usually pretty picked over by the last day of the sale. That's the perfect opportunity to get creative and hand out rock-bottom bargains! We found that running "Fill a Bag

for a Buck” or saying everything is half price is extremely effective.

10. Don't Forget the Cookies and Lemonade!

What better way to teach your children entrepreneurial skills and let them earn a little money in the process than to have them set up their own little cookie and lemonade stands at the sale? Or, if it's cold outside, try selling hot chocolate, coffee, and fresh cinnamon rolls. One yard sale, we even set up a pancake griddle and sold pancakes hot off the griddle on Saturday morning.

10 WAYS TO EARN AN EXTRA \$100 PER MONTH

1. Paint Address Numbers on Curbs

Ever tried to find someone's house and had a hard time because you couldn't see any address numbers on the houses? Provide a solution to this problem by offering to paint house numbers on the curbs in front of houses. Get some paint and number stencils and write up a simple flier with details on your services. Canvas a few neighborhoods early in the week to let them know you'll be in their area on Saturday painting numbers on the curbs. You can charge \$10 to \$15 per house for this service and easily make \$100 on a Saturday for just a few hours' worth of work. Be sure to check local laws as this may not be allowed in all municipalities.

2. Have a Booth at the Farmers' Market

Most towns and cities have a weekly farmers' market during the summer. Look into how much it would cost to set up a booth and sell baked goods or garden produce. I've seen people sell everything from jelly to quilts to tomatoes to plants.

3. Sell Your Clutter

Look around your house and see what items you are no longer using or could get rid of. Have a garage sale or sell these individual items on Craigslist or eBay. If you find that you enjoy selling your clutter for cash, you could turn this into a business! Kim says, "I let all of my friends know that I will sell their junk on eBay or Craigslist or Amazon.com for them. I keep 50 percent of the sale and they don't have to do the work of listing the item and mailing things to buyers. I have sold unopened bags of grout, DVDs, boxes of books, artwork, furniture, clothing, and lots of baby items. I even sold some medical equipment my husband no longer uses in his practice to a buyer in Mexico."

4. Become a Transcriptionist

Many professionals and companies working in health care, law, and business need transcriptionists. Universities also sometimes hire transcriptionists. If you have strong typing skills, this could be a great part-time job for you.

5. Walk Dogs or Board Pets

Advertise at pet stores or on Craigslist and see if there are pet owners in your area looking for someone to walk their dog on a regular basis or keep their pet for a few days while they are out of town. Call your local business bureau to confirm that a business of this type is allowed in your city.

6. Proctor Testing

Contact your local universities to see if they are in need of test proctors. If you have a college degree, you can usually qualify to proctor tests, and it's a very simple way to earn money.

7. Babysit

In most areas, you do not need a license to care for four or fewer children in your home. If you are a stay-at-home mom, caring for one child in addition to your own can bring in an extra \$400 or more per month. If you don't have children of your own, being available to babysit during the day or in the evenings can provide many jobs. At least in our area, good babysitters with flexible schedules are in high demand.

8. Sell Plasma

If you are healthy and want to help others, you can earn at least \$100 per month in most areas by selling plasma. Contact your local blood bank to find out more information on the requirements and pay.

9. Teach a Class

What are you skilled at? Teach that skill to others in a class setting and make a small profit off it. Many community centers and libraries allow you to have a room for free to teach classes. If you charge \$5 or \$10 per person, and ten people come each week, that's \$200 to \$400 in extra income each month.

10. Write

Some small magazines and newspapers have paid writing jobs available for those with decent writing and research skills. Local parents' magazines and newsletters are often looking for new content and do not require exclusive rights. While they often only pay \$25 per article, if you submit the same article for publication in a hundred different parenting publications and ten of them publish it, that's \$250 in profit from the one article. There are also many higher-paying freelance jobs available online or for larger publications, once you get your foot in the door.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

It's been said, "You'll be the same person you were last year except for the books you read and the people you meet." Books have had a profound impact upon me. They've helped to shape the way I think and live. They stimulate me intellectually, they challenge me to improve as a person, and they teach me new concepts and ideas. I highly encourage you to set a goal to read at least one nonfiction book every month. If that seems impossible, then commit to reading just five minutes per day. I've found it works best for me to read early in the morning before I begin my day.

If you struggle to find time to read, listen to audio books. This is a great way to make the most of a commute or to keep your mind occupied while you're folding laundry or washing dishes.

RECOMMENDED READING

Goal Setting and Personal Responsibility

Flipping the Switch: Unleash the Power of Personal Accountability

Using the QBQ!, John G. Miller, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2006

Today Matters: 12 Daily Practices to Guarantee Tomorrow's Success, John C. Maxwell, Paw Prints, 2008

Time and Life Management

Eat That Frog! 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time, Brian Tracy, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2007.

168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think, Laura Vanderkam, New York: Portfolio, 2010

Tell Your Time (ebook), Amy Lynn Andrews (available at <http://amyllynnandrews.com/tell-your-time/>)

Simple Living

From Clutter to Clarity: Simplifying Life from the Inside Out, Nancy Twigg, Cincinnati, OH: Standard Pub, 2007

Organized Simplicity: The Clutter-Free Approach to Intentional Living, Tsh Oxenreider, Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Home, 2010

Finances

America's Cheapest Family Gets You Right on the Money: Your Guide to Living Better, Spending Less, and Cashing in on Your Dreams, Steve Economides and Annette Economides, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007

Family Feasts for \$75 a Week: A Penny-Wise Mom Shares Her Recipe for Cutting Hundreds from Your Monthly Food Bill, Mary Ostyn, Birmingham, AL: Oxmoor House, 2009

Miserly Moms: Living Well on Less in a Tough Economy, Jonni McCoy, Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2009

Shift Your Habit: Easy Ways to Save Money, Simplify Your Life, and Save the Planet, Elizabeth Rogers and Colleen J. Howell, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2010

The Total Money Makeover: A Proven Plan for Financial Fitness, Dave Ramsey, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Pub., 2009

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

MoneySavingMom.com

SimpleMom.net

FlyLady.net

JonAcuff.com

DaveRamsey.com

GetRichSlowly.net

WORKSHEETS

Goal-Setting Worksheets

Time Budget Worksheets

Budgeting Worksheets

Price Book Worksheet

STEP 2: CHOOSE 3 GOALS

1. This goal can be achieved in six to twelve months.

2. This goal can be achieved in a few years.

3. This goal is an audacious goal.

MY TOP PRIORITIES

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

WEEKLY TIME BUDGET WORKSHEET

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
MIDNIGHT				
1 AM				
2 AM				
3 AM				
4 AM				
5 AM				
6 AM				
7 AM				
8 AM				
9 AM				
10 AM				
11 AM				
NOON				
1 PM				
2 PM				
3 PM				
4 PM				
5 PM				
6 PM				
7 PM				
8 PM				
9 PM				
10 PM				
11 PM				

WEEKLY TIME BUDGET WORKSHEET

	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
MIDNIGHT			
1 AM			
2 AM			
3 AM			
4 AM			
5 AM			
6 AM			
7 AM			
8 AM			
9 AM			
10 AM			
11 AM			
NOON			
1 PM			
2 PM			
3 PM			
4 PM			
5 PM			
6 PM			
7 PM			
8 PM			
9 PM			
10 PM			
11 PM			

BARE-BONES BUDGET WORKSHEET

BUDGET ITEM	MONTHLY*	WEEKLY*
FOOD		
Groceries		
Eating out		
BASIC UTILITIES		
Trash		
Water		
Electricity		
Gas		
Landline phone service		
Cell phone service		
SHELTER		
Mortgage/Rent		
Homeowner's/Renter's insurance		
TRANSPORTATION		
Car payment #1		
Car payment #2		
Public transportation		
Gas		
Auto repairs		
TOTALS		

*If you have an expense (such as groceries) that occurs weekly, you can convert it to a monthly expense by multiplying the weekly expense by 4.3. To convert a monthly expense to a weekly expense, divide the monthly expense by 4.3.

FULL-FLEDGED BUDGET WORKSHEET

BUDGET ITEM	MONTHLY*	WEEKLY*
CHARITABLE GIFTS		
Savings		
Emergency fund		
Retirement fund		
College fund		
House fund		
Car fund		
Baby fund		
HOUSING		
Mortgage/Rent		
Real estate taxes		
Homeowner's/Renter's insurance		
Repairs/Remodeling		
UTILITIES		
Electricity		
Water		
Gas		
Landline phone		
Cell phone		
Trash		
Cable		
Internet		
FOOD/ HOUSEHOLD ITEMS		
Groceries		
Eating out		
Household products		
Cosmetics		
TRANSPORTATION		
Car payment(s)		
Gas		
Repairs		
Car insurance		
License and taxes		
COLUMN TOTAL		

FULL-FLEDGED BUDGET WORKSHEET

BUDGET ITEM	MONTHLY*	WEEKLY*
HEALTH AND MEDICAL		
Disability insurance		
Health insurance		
Life insurance		
Doctor's visits		
Dental work		
Optometrist		
Contacts/Glasses		
Medications		
DEBT		
Credit card #1		
Credit card #2		
Credit card #3		
Line of credit		
Student loan 1		
Student loan 2		
Other		
PERSONAL/ RECREATION		
Clothing		
Child care/ Babysitting		
Hair care		
Education		
School Tuition/ Supplies		
Subscriptions		
Gifts		
Miscellaneous		
Vacation		
Entertainment		
Other		
COLUMN TOTAL		
GRAND TOTAL		

