

## GET OUT OF DEBT

If you have credit card debt the first step is to stop charging. One of the best things you can do for your financial health is to get out of debt. However, not all debts are created equal. Some debt, such as mortgages or students loans, may offer tax write-offs and paying them over time can actually help you build wealth. Other debt, such as credit cards, offer no such benefits and charge interest that will take money away from your budget and away from your future wealth.

### ..... DID YOU KNOW? .....

It is important to make more than the minimum payment on your credit card or you may end up paying substantially more than you originally borrowed!

#### EXAMPLE:

Making only the minimum payment

Original Balance:	\$1,000
Interest Rate:	18%
Minimum payment:	\$25/mo
Time to Pay-Off:	9.4 years
Cost:	\$1,925
	(\$925 interest plus \$1,000 original balance)

To create a realistic repayment schedule, call your bank or use an online credit card repayment calculator, such as:

[www.federalreserve.gov/  
cardcalculator](http://www.federalreserve.gov/cardcalculator)

If your debt feels too high or out of control, find a reputable credit counselor at: [www.nfcc.org](http://www.nfcc.org)



The **Women's Council** is a state government agency and Wisconsin's commission on the status of women and girls.

Whatever your income level or financial situation, visit the **Women's Council** website for more ideas and resources to make your financial life successful.



Women's Council  
· Wisconsin ·

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**Wisconsin  
Women's Council  
State of Wisconsin**

VISIT US ONLINE AT  
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# MONEY \$AVVY

A Wisconsin Women's  
Council Program

## Financial Tips for Women



**Savvy Tips and Simple Steps  
to a Financially Healthier You**

[WOMENSCOUNCIL.WI.GOV/MoneySavvy](http://WOMENSCOUNCIL.WI.GOV/MoneySavvy)

# Get Your Free Credit Report

[annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com)

or call

**1-877-322-8228**

You are entitled to a free credit report once every 12 months from each of the 3 nationwide consumer credit reporting companies. Check your credit report at least once a year. The information in your report is used by banks, employers, landlords and others to determine your credit worthiness. Visit the Federal Trade Commission website, [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov), for more information on what to look for and how to correct errors.

## PROTECT PERSONAL INFORMATION

Shred cancelled checks, bills, statements, or other financial papers. Put passwords on all your accounts including credit card, bank, and phone accounts. When creating passwords, avoid using easily available information (maiden names, birth dates, phone numbers) or obvious choices like a series of consecutive numbers or your hometown sports team.

### EXPERT TIP

To better monitor your credit and watch for fraud or other problems, spread out your three free credit reports over the whole year—for example, get your Experian report in January, Equifax in May, and TransUnion in September—then start over again next year!

### EXPERT TIP

Review your Social Security statement annually. Your annual statement should arrive by mail — beware of email scams! Contact your local Social Security Office if you have questions. [www.SocialSecurity.gov](http://www.SocialSecurity.gov)



## SET FINANCIAL GOALS

Your goal doesn't have to be big. Start by making smaller goals that are easier to achieve in the short-term and measure progress. Save ahead for something you care about and will be motivated to stick with, such as saving for a new computer or holiday gifts.

## AUTOMATE YOUR SAVINGS

Save 1% (or more) from your paycheck or other income every week. Ask your bank or payroll office to put a set amount into your savings account automatically. Save before you start spending. Many people try to save "what's left over" at the end of the month, but experts say to pay yourself first and you'll be saving before you know it!

## BUILD AN EMERGENCY FUND

Expect the unexpected. It is important for your overall financial health to budget for and keep a separate emergency fund. This fund is a financial cushion when emergencies strike, such as job loss or an illness that prevents you from working. Otherwise you may be forced to rely on credit cards or other borrowing that will only compound your financial problems. Set an initial savings goal of one month of expenses. Don't be overwhelmed by this goal, but automate your savings and consistently build up your fund to have 3–6 months of expenses on hand.

## REVIEW INSURANCE COVERAGE

Review your insurance coverage and beneficiaries annually with your agents and/or employer to ensure you have adequate coverage and understand your policies and deductibles. Areas of insurance coverage to explore may include health, job loss, life/death, disability, auto, home/rental, and long-term care.

## SHOP YOUR BANKING OPTIONS

When opening a checking or savings account, it's important to know that there are a variety of account options to choose from depending on your personal needs and objectives. The right account for one person may not be right for another person. Decide which account features are most important to you based on your financial situation, habits, preferences and goals. Shop around! Learn about the products offered by your local bank or credit union to find the account option that offers the best match. Many financial institutions also have bankers available to help you choose the account that's right for you.

## PLAN NOW FOR RETIREMENT

Make retirement saving as easy and automatic as possible. Pay yourself first! Automatically deduct a set amount from your paycheck to go into a retirement savings account such as an IRA or 401(k) plan. If your company offers a 401(k) plan, the percentage of your salary that you contribute will be deducted before taxes (pre-tax income).

## MAKE (OR REVIEW) YOUR WILL

No one wants to think about dying. However, a will is the most important legal document in your family. If you have children, it is critical for determining legal guardianship and for ensuring that your wishes are fulfilled regarding your family and your belongings. Life changes so your will should be reviewed every few years.