

Creating a budget:

A good first step in taking control of your finances.

A proactive approach to budgeting along with a disciplined savings routine can go a long way in helping you pursue your goals. By looking closely at your expenses, you have the opportunity to make adjustments to your spending so that you can contribute more to savings as well as pay for life's unexpected expenses.

How to get started

- First, take a minute to read through the income, savings and investments, and expenses sections of this budget worksheet.
- Add any other expenses that reflect your personal financial situation.
- Gather supporting documents such as payroll stubs, savings and investment account statements, credit card statements, your checkbook, receipts, etc. Then, fill in the information below.

Pretax income	Monthly
Wages and bonuses	\$
Interest income (CDs, bonds)	\$
Investment income (dividends, capital gains from stocks and mutual funds)	\$
Other	\$
Income subtotal	\$

Savings and investments	Monthly
Savings accounts/emergency funds	\$
401(k)/retirement accounts	\$
Other stocks/bonds/mutual funds	\$
College savings	\$
Other	\$
Total monthly amount you save/invest	\$

Income taxes withheld	Monthly
Federal	\$
State and local	\$
Social Security/Medicare	\$
Other	\$
Income taxes subtotal	\$
Monthly income after taxes	\$

After-tax income – Savings = **Spendable income** \$

My action plan to increase savings:

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Investment products:

Are Not FDIC Insured	Are Not Bank Guaranteed	May Lose Value
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Fixed expenses	Monthly budget amount	Monthly actual amount	Difference	Steps to reduce expenses
Mortgage payment/rent	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Property taxes	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Homeowners/renters insurance	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Car payment	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Auto insurance	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Child care	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Life/disability/health insurance	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Other	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Fixed expenses subtotal	\$	\$	+/- \$	

Variable expenses	Monthly budget amount	Monthly actual amount	Difference	Steps to reduce expenses
Gas/tolls	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Dry cleaning	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Lunch/coffee/snacks	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Dining out/entertainment	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Shopping purchases (any type)	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Money to your children	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Car maintenance	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Home maintenance	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Gas/electric	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Cable/phone	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Credit cards/debt payments	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Groceries	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Other	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Monthly variable expenses subtotal	\$	\$	+/- \$	
Total monthly expenses	\$	\$	+/- \$	

Spendable income (from reverse side) — Total monthly expenses = **How much more can I save or use for debt reduction?: \$**

HOW TO GET HELP

If you're not sure what to do next, the Merrill Edge Advisory Center™ is ready to help. A Merrill Edge Financial Solutions Advisor™ can help you assess your current financial situation and develop a strategy that addresses your short-term needs as well as longer-term goals. You'll receive specific action steps that you can take to help you get and stay on track.

If you're already a client, contact a Merrill Edge Financial Solutions Advisor™ at **1.888.ML.INVEST (1.888.654.6837)**, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 1 a.m. Eastern. For your convenience, please have your account number ready when you call. **Interested in becoming a client?** Please call **1.888.MER.EDGE (1.888.637.3343)**, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to midnight, Eastern.