



BUDGET MASTER CHECKLIST

Ready to get your finances under control? Start with a plan. The more you prepare for your financial journey, the more successful you'll likely be. Follow this checklist to get started.

COMPLETED BY: _____

DATE COMPLETED _____

- LIST EXPECTED INCOME/PAYCHECKS**
List paycheck amounts (net of taxes). If you have irregular income (ex: commission-based or self-employed), use the lowest pay received in last 12 months as a baseline. It is easier to adjust upwards later in a good month than adjusting downwards in a bad month.
- REVIEW BANK STATEMENTS**
People often underestimate how much they spend. Write down total amount spent in each category: giving, savings, housing, transportation, food, personal, lifestyle, health, insurance, and debt.
- LIST YOUR EXPENSES**
Using the amounts from the previous step, list your monthly total expenses within each category in the order of priority. Feel free to create subcategories so that it is easier for tracking. Everyone has different expense categories.
- CONSIDER NONROUTINE EXPENSES**
There are certain expenses that happen irregularly (quarterly payments, birthdays, Christmas, vacation, etc.). Consider setting aside a little money each month so that the amount is saved by the time that expense comes up.
- SUBTRACT YOUR EXPENSES FROM INCOME**
This is the only real math in your budget. You need to make sure your expenses do not exceed your expected income. Budget surplus should be applied to the budget in order of priority (1. starter emergency fund, 2. non-mortgage debt, 3. Emergency fund, 4. Retirement, 5. Kids college, 6. Mortgage 7. Live generously)
- CHALLENGE THE BUDGET**
Are there areas you could cut back so that a surplus can be created and achieve goals more quickly (ex: eating out, subscriptions services, etc.)? Ask yourself, "Do I need this or is it nice to have?"
- TRACK EXPENSES**
Revisit the budget weekly to ensure your expenses are appropriately categorized. Add any unexpected income and expense items to the budget. Make adjustments as considered necessary.
- CHECK PROGRESS ON DEBT SNOWBALL**
This helps you accomplish your goals by diligently focusing on the things that are holding you back. Make any necessary updates and celebrate your wins!
- REVIEW BUDGET VS. ACTUAL**
At the end of the month, it's time to see how you did against your budget. If you have any categories that are overbudget, is there something that needs attention or changing for the next month. For items underbudget, celebrate those but also challenge if you budgeted too much for them. Are there any income or expense items that weren't planned for?
- CREATE NEXT MONTH'S BUDGET**
Don't wait for the month to start to get this process going. Prepare the budget for next month by the last day of the month.