

THE THREE QUESTIONS FOR AMBER SPENDING

For anything you mark AMBER, ask:

- Would I buy this again today?
- Does this make my life meaningfully better?
- What would I rather this money do?

That final question changes the conversation. £30 is not just £30. It might also be part of your emergency fund, a debt reduction, a school-uniform pot or a guilt-free day out next month.

YOUR MONEY LEAK TOTAL

At the end of your investigation, total the RED spending and the AMBER spending you decide to change.

MY MONEY LEAK TOTAL

RED spending I can stop: £_____

AMBER spending I will reduce/change: £_____

Total monthly money potentially released: £_____

Job I will give that money:

Do not exaggerate. If you can realistically free £35, write £35. A believable £35 that repeats is more useful than an imaginary £300 saving you will never maintain.

DO THIS NOW — 10 MINUTES

- ☐ Open the last seven days of transactions.
- ☐ Mark each flexible transaction GREEN, AMBER or RED.
- ☐ Choose one RED leak you can stop.

- ☐ Choose one AMBER item to question.
- ☐ Add up the money you could release.
- ☐ Give that money a job before it disappears again.

ESCAPE RULE 1

**IF I DON'T TELL MY MONEY WHERE TO GO, I WILL
END UP WONDERING WHERE IT WENT.**

Now that you can see where money goes, the next trap is timing.

Because even people who understand their spending can still feel rich on payday and broke three weeks later.

THE PAYDAY TRAP

Why You Feel Rich for Three Days and Broke for Three Weeks — Money Trap 2

• • •

Payday can play tricks on your brain.

Yesterday: £42.18.

Today: £2,242.18.

Your banking app looks magnificent.

Your brain whispers: We are wealthy now.

You are not wealthy now. You are looking at several weeks of money arriving on one day.

**PAYDAY MONEY IS NOT ONE BIG PILE. IT IS A
QUEUE OF FUTURE JOBS.**

WHY PAYDAY FEELS SO GOOD

Payday creates relief. Bills can be paid. The fridge can be filled. Things delayed can finally be bought.

That relief is real. But relief can quickly become permission.

A meal out. A few online purchases. Something for the children. A little treat because the month was hard. Nothing individually outrageous.

Then the direct debits arrive.

The Payday Trap happens when the balance is mistaken for spendable money.

SAFE-TO-SPEND MONEY™

Safe-to-Spend Money™ is the amount you can genuinely use after the money needed for essential jobs has been protected.

SAFE-TO-SPEND MONEY™

Money currently available

- bills and commitments due before next income
 - realistic essential living costs
 - money deliberately set aside for known future costs
 - planned saving/debt/future commitments
- = SAFE-TO-SPEND

Safe-to-Spend is not a moral judgement. It is a decision number.

If your bank balance is £1,400 but £1,180 already has jobs, your spending number is not £1,400.

**YOUR BANK BALANCE TELLS YOU WHAT IS
THERE. SAFE-TO-SPEND TELLS YOU WHAT IS
FREE.**

PAYDAY 15™

You do not need to spend payday staring at spreadsheets.

Give yourself 15 minutes.

In those 15 minutes, divide the money into five jobs:

PAYDAY 15™

PAY — bills and required commitments.

LIVE — food, travel, health, children and normal essentials.

PREPARE — known future costs and sinking funds.

BUILD — emergency savings, extra debt reduction and Future You.

ENJOY — affordable discretionary spending.

The order matters.

ENJOY is not banned. It simply stops pretending to be PAY, LIVE or PREPARE.

1. PAY

Protect the commitments with serious consequences first: housing, Council Tax or Rates, utilities, insurance, required debt payments and other essential bills.

If some bills leave later in the month, that money is still already spoken for.

2. LIVE

Set aside a realistic amount for food, transport, medication, children and ordinary life.

If you underestimate this category, the budget will appear to work while you quietly raid another pot.

3. PREPARE

This is where future expenses begin to stop being surprises.

Christmas. Birthdays. MOT. School costs. Annual subscriptions. Car maintenance. A planned trip.

You will build this more fully in Chapter 5.