

Bad Money Habits to Break

Behaviors worth changing.

Do bad money habits constrain your financial progress?

Many people fall into the same financial behavior patterns, year after year. If you sometimes succumb to these financial tendencies, now is as good a time as any to alter your behavior.

1. Lending money to family and friends.

You may know someone who has lent a few thousand to a sister or brother, a few hundred to an old buddy, and so on. Generosity is a virtue, but personal loans can easily transform into personal financial losses for the lender. If you must loan money to a friend or family member, mention that you will charge interest and set a repayment plan with deadlines. Better yet, don't do it at all. If your friends or relatives can't learn to budget, why should you bail them out?

2. Spending more than you make.

Living beyond your means, living on margin, or whatever you wish to call it — it is a path toward significant debt. Wealth is seldom made by buying possessions; today's flashy material items may become the garage sale junk of the future.

3. Saving little or nothing.

Good savers build emergency funds, have money to invest and compound, and leave the stress of living paycheck to paycheck behind. If you are not able to put extra money away, there is another way to get some: a second job. Even working 15 to 20 hours more per week could make a big difference.

4. Living without a budget.

You may make enough money that you don't feel you need to budget. In truth, few of us are really that wealthy. In calculating a budget, you may find opportunities for savings and detect wasteful spending.

5. Frivolous spending.

Advertisers can make us feel as if we have sudden needs; needs we must respond to, or ones that can only be met via the purchase of a product. See their ploys for what they are. Think twice before spending impulsively.

6. Not using cash often enough.

No one can deny that the world runs on credit, but that doesn't mean your household should. Pay with cash as often as your budget allows.

7. Thinking you'll win the lottery.

When the headlines are filled with news of big lottery jackpots, you might be tempted to throw a few bucks at a lottery ticket. It's important, though, to be fully aware that the odds in the lottery and other games of chance are against you. A few bucks once in a while is one thing, but a few bucks (or more) every week could possibly lead to financial and personal issues.

8. Inadequate financial literacy.

Is the financial world boring? To many people, it can seem that way. The *Wall Street Journal* is not exactly *Rolling Stone*, and *The Economist* is hardly light reading. You don't have to start there, however. There are great, readable, and even, entertaining websites filled with useful financial information.

Reading an article per day on these websites could help you greatly increase your financial understanding.

9. Not contributing to retirement plans.

The earlier you contribute to them, the better; the more you contribute to them, the more compounding of those invested assets you may potentially realize.

10. DIY retirement strategy.

Those who save for retirement without the help of professionals may leave themselves open to abrupt, emotional investing mistakes and other oversights. Another common tendency is to vastly underestimate the amount of money needed for the future. Few people have the time to amass the knowledge and skill set possessed by a financial services professional with years of experience. Instead of flirting with trial and error, see a professional for insight.

[Contact us](#) for help in financial planning.

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