



Planning Ahead



Did you get a big refund this year? If so, I bet you were happy. But should big refunds

really be a cause for celebration? The answer is usually “NO” and here’s why. In most cases your refund is simply the amount of money by which you overpaid your taxes during the year. In other words, you’re getting your own money back, money you could have used during the year.

In order to reduce your refund and increase the amount of your paychecks, talk with your employer about changing the number of allowances you claim on your W-4 form. If you find the form confusing and have access to a computer, go to www.irs.gov and type in “withholding calculator”. It will recommend the number of allowances you should claim.

Did You Know?

If you qualified for the Earned Income Credit (EIC) this year, you may be eligible for the “Advance EIC” in which case you can get a part of your EIC in every paycheck rather than waiting for your refund. To get “Advance EIC” you must fill out a W-5 form which is available from employers.



The Saving Center

Little Things That Can Save You Big Dollars

- A pop per day from a vending machine can cost over \$20/month or \$240/year. Buy it at the store and bring it to work and you’ll save a lot. Give it up entirely and you’ll save even more.
- Cancel “Call Waiting” and save around \$60/year. Cancel “Caller ID” and save about \$120/year. Cancel both and save around \$180/year.
- Want an incentive for quitting or cutting back on smoking? A pack of cigarettes costs about \$5. Smoke a pack a day and it will cost you about \$1800/year. Two packs/day will cost you \$3600/year. Imagine the nice and dependable used car you could get for that! Or if you prefer, use it as a down payment on a home of your own!
- A snack from a vending machine costs about 75 cents. Buy one each day at work and it will cost you around \$200/year. Buy them in multi-packs at the store and save at least \$60/year. Give them up and save the entire \$200.
- Take good care of your change. Instead of tossing it here and there, save your change in one place. As little as 75 cents/day will add up to \$275 in a year.

Ask the Money Man

Q. *I’m worried about becoming a victim of fraud. What are some things I can do to protect myself?*

A. You’re right to be concerned. Many people become victims of fraud, especially older people. Here are some things you can do to lessen your chances of being victimized:

- Never give out your Social Security, bank account, or charge card numbers as well as any other personal information to anyone you don’t know and trust.
- Be suspicious of claims that you have won a prize but in order to get it you must first send money.
- Be wary of promises of large profits with little or no effort needed on your part. If something sounds too good to be true, it may very well not be.
- Be wary of anyone who sells door-to-door, accepts only cash, does not have a listed phone number and/or requests payment up-front. Be suspicious of anyone who says something you know isn’t true.
- Before hiring someone to do some work for you or before giving money based on a charitable request, check out the company or charity with the Better Business Bureau (774-8236) and/or Attorney General’s Office (356-0400).

Would you like to be smarter about money? Would you like to worry less about it? Would you like to get more of the things you really need and want? Then this course is for you!

What: “Dollar Sense”— A Non-judgemental and Fun (really) Money Management Course, consisting of 5, 2 hour classes.

When: “Dollar Sense” is offered several times during the year. The next course will begin on Tuesday June 3, 2008 and run for 5 consecutive Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Cost: Only \$5 for the entire course.

Where: MSU/Kent County Extension Office
775 Ball Ave. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503



What “Dollar Sense” Students Have Said:

“Honestly, I thought this class would be boring and unhelpful, but I was very wrong—it was awesome!” —Keisha—

“Will help me get the things I want for my children and myself.” —Tammy—

Call Dave Treul at 336-3212 with questions or to register.
Pre-registration is required.

Come join us and make the most of your money!

Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by calling Dave Treul at 336-3265 five days prior to ensure sufficient time to make arrangements. Requests received after this date will be met when possible.



Credit Corner

Correcting Errors in Your Credit Report

Errors in your credit report? You bet! With all the information that credit bureaus handle there could easily be an error in your report and these errors could hurt you. Mistakes in your credit report could cause your loan, rent, or possibly even job application to be turned down. And even if you get a loan, errors in your credit report could result in you paying higher interest.

The good news is that you have the right to have any mistakes corrected **at no charge to you**. Take a careful look at your report and if you think there is an error, in your report, request an investigation. There will be instructions for doing this with your report. The credit bureau must investigate your complaint within 30 days and notify you of the results. Any errors they find must be removed. If the credit bureau doesn't find an error but you still believe that your report is inaccurate, you can try to resolve the problem by contacting the creditor directly. If that doesn't work, you also have the right to explain the situation (100 words or less) and have this added to your report.

To get copies of your credit report from each of the 3 major credit reporting agencies, go to www.annualcreditreport.com or call (877) 322-8228.

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Challenging Your Beliefs About Money-The Key to Improving Your Money Life

Our beliefs control our behaviors like a dictator. If we believe we can't do something or don't have to do something, we probably won't. **And think about this: our beliefs could be wrong!**

In order to improve our money lives, we need to challenge our beliefs about money and money management and change those beliefs that are hurting us such as a belief that you can't or don't need to save, and/or that saving is foolish when you could be spending the money instead.

For example you may believe you can't save and the fact that there's no money left a week before payday seems like pretty good evidence that you're right. But believing you can't save doesn't necessarily make it so. It's time to challenge your beliefs.

The truth is you could have saved had you decided that saving was more important than spending money during the month for snacks or some other unnecessary expense. Or you could have saved by simply keeping all the change you got during the month.

Start challenging your beliefs about money today and you'll see your money life improve. Believe it!



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