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Splurge Vs. Save

Have you ever bought something because it was a little cheaper, only to be disappointed by it after you bought it? Buying one item over another based on price might not always be a good idea. Here are a couple of items that you might want to spend a little extra on now to save more in the long run.

Depending on the type of shoe you're shopping for, footwear may be one place where it pays to purchase something better made. Less expensive shoes will likely wear out faster and may be hard on your feet. If you're shopping for athletic shoes, it's better to shop for supportive, comfortable shoes, which may not be the least expensive. If you're shopping for shoes you likely will only wear once or twice, cheaper may be better the way to go. No need to spend a lot of money on a designer shoe that will end up spending most of its time in your closet.

Another area where you could splurge is on a camera. Most smart phones and cell phones come with an impressive built-in camera. If you have a passion for photography or want better quality pictures, then it would be worthwhile to upgrade to a better camera with a higher pixel resolution.

An easy way to save money by going "cheap" is in the grocery store. Often times, store brand or generic items contain the same ingredients as the brand name products, but don't carry the higher price. For example, generic baking soda is exactly the same as the name brand product.

Even though less expensive items are usually good for your budget, it won't always apply in every case. Know what you want from your purchase, do some research and decide if it is worth it to splurge or better to save.



Q: My spouse passed away and he had a lot of credit card debt. Am I now responsible for the bills?

A: It all depends on how each account was established. If the accounts were only in your spouse's name then you should send each creditor a copy of the death certificate. Some creditors adjust small balances and forgive the debt. Creditors may be entitled to collect from the estate of a deceased borrower. If you are listed as an authorized user, you are not legally responsible to pay the debt. However you may be asked to sign a form to make you the applicant, which means you'll have to pay this back. If you were listed as a co-applicant, you will be responsible for the debt. In certain states, debt incurred during the marriage is considered community property so regardless of who made the charges, you are now responsible. The best thing to do is get in touch with the creditor. If you still feel that you are not responsible for the debt, it may be in your best interest to get in touch with the Federal Trade Commission at 1-877-FTC-HELP or the Consumer Protection Bureau at 1-800-441-2555 to inquire about debt collection practices. If you are still not satisfied with the results you can speak to a consumer law attorney.

Did you know...

Did you know that Advantage CCS has a new online budget tool available? The Advantage Budget Advisor can help you get a handle on your finances.

- The Advantage Budget Advisor includes tools to help you evaluate your spending habits.
- The Advisor considers your income, expenses, assets and liabilities and provides space for you to input future savings goals and other expenses.
- You'll receive personalized suggestions on how to improve your budget and tips for getting out of debt. You'll also receive a customized action plan to help you achieve your goals.
- The Advisor also allows you to generate "what if" scenarios to help you find a budget strategy that works for you. You'll have access to money savings tips, tricks and strategies from our experts.

Check it out at <http://onlinebudgetadvisor.com>

Taking the \$care out of Halloween and Beyond

It starts with Halloween. Then before you know it, you're talking turkey. Your Thanksgiving meal is barely digested and it's time to start your holiday shopping. The last present has just been unwrapped and who is knocking at your door? The tax man. Not to mention, the temperature is dropping. Did you change your car's antifreeze? The fourth quarter of the year can be overwhelming, but here are some tips to get prepared and to keep you and your budget on track.

Last year, consumers spent approximately \$6 billion on Halloween. It has become one of the country's most celebrated holidays. From costumes to parties, there are ways to stay on budget.

One of the easiest ways to save money on Halloween is by making costumes for you and your family instead of buying new ones every year. Between thrift stores, your attic and your closet the possibilities are endless. Occupational costumes are a good place to start for savings. They usually require very few extras and frills that you don't already have sitting around the house.

When it comes to buying Halloween candy, there are some things you can do to realize big savings. Be careful not to buy your candy too early as you may end up eating more of your stash than you would like. Buying candy that you don't particularly like will also help keep your hand out of the candy jar. Check the weekly grocery store advertisements and fliers before candy shopping to see which brands of candy will be on sale that week. Most grocery stores will put different candy brands on sale before Halloween and don't forget to check your coupons. Typically, candy coupons pop up a

couple weeks before Halloween.

Once Halloween is over, it seems like in no time, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Hanukkah are here. To avoid some of the holiday stress, start planning now. First, check your calendar. Mark all your upcoming events, so you can easily plan your schedule. Determine your budget for each holiday and come up with a way to track your spending. If you're hosting Thanksgiving this year, develop your guest list and your menu. Schedule yourself time for shopping, baking and wrapping. Starting now, try to commit to completing one task per week. Planning your schedule out in advance will keep you from getting frenzied.

Winter comes with the holidays and it's a good idea to prepare your car for the colder temperatures. Make sure your oil is changed and replace your windshield wipers. Check your battery to make sure its connections are corrosion free and if your battery is over three years old, make sure it's still holding a charge. Check your tire pressure and make sure your four-wheel drive is working properly. Check your antifreeze and prepare an emergency kit just in case you get stranded.

As the year comes to a close, the tax season will just begin. Now is a good time to start gathering receipts and other documents you'll need for your taxes. Organize the items and keep them in one place, so they will be accessible when you're ready to start your taxes.

Finally, don't forget to take some time and enjoy the holiday season!

Resources

Preparing for year's end

<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-make-halloween-affordable.html>

http://www.insidercarsecrets.com/winter_prep.html

www.stretcher.com

www.irs.gov

The Advantage Challenge

Advantage CCS challenges you to ...make your own or your child's Halloween costume this year for less than \$10. Get creative. Shop thrift stores and flea markets. Browse the internet for creative ideas and then figure out how to make it on a budget of \$10 or less. Don't forget to check out your own closet for supplies or borrow items from friends. We'd love to see what you come up with! Email costume pictures to hmurray@advantageccs.org

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