

- ▶ Staying on budget for back to school
- ▶ Information on your credit report
- ▶ Ways to earn extra income

## Back to School on a Budget

Summer is quickly coming to an end and the school bells will be ringing before you know it! The expenses of getting children ready to go back to school can be overwhelming. It's important to start early, plan ahead and pace ourselves, so we aren't tempted to overspend.

First things first, how much will you need to spend? Set up a budget before you shop and stick to it to help keep your costs to a minimum. Share the budget amount with your children so they understand how much is available. This is a great time to go over wants vs. needs. Go over the list with them and help them prioritize it. Start your shopping trip at home. Grab a basket and go through the house and take inventory of your children's clothing and supplies before you start shopping. You may find brand new school supplies such as pencils, pens, paper, notebooks and scissors that were never used.

Have your children try on clothing to see if they still fit. You can also do double duty as you are going through the closet and create three groups: keep, donate or throw away. Visit some consignment shops. These shops are very particular with the condition of clothing they sell in their shops. Sometimes they have new merchandise with the tags on that have never been worn at a much lower cost. It's still early enough to use a lay-away plan. You can take advantage of early shopping and stretch out your payments over a period of time. See what the store's policy is if an item they are holding for you in lay-away goes on sale. Sometimes they will give you the lower price.

Don't be afraid to comparison shop; check for coupons and on-line for discounts. Check out the flyers and see who has the best deal. Planning ahead can help keep your back to school costs lower and your budget intact.

## Tips

*Heading off to college can be an overwhelming time. Here are some tips to make the financial transition smooth for your college freshman:*

- Advise your student to follow a budget. Be up front with him or her about how much extra money you are willing to supplement with and give some budgeting advice.
- Some students use credit for the first time when they're at college. Advise your college student that credit is not income and should only be used in true emergencies.
- Encourage your college student to take on a part-time job instead of living off their student loan refund. If possible, make the interest payments on student loan debt.
- If it seems like their spending is getting out of control, encourage him or her to track expenses for a month to figure out where their money is going.



**Q:** How long does it take for my credit score to improve and for disputed items to be removed from my credit report?

**A:** There is no quick answer for this one. Thirty-five percent of your credit score is your payment history. It's the largest part of your credit score. The best way to improve your credit score is to pay your bills on time. Remember to order your free credit report every year from each of the three major credit bureaus Experian, Equifax and TransUnion. Since you are trying to improve your credit score, it's worth it to pay the fee to get your credit score to see the improvement.

It can be somewhat of a challenge to dispute something that's on your credit report. However, there have been some changes to the process. The credit bureaus have hired more staff to investigate disputes, so they are handled in a timelier manner. When you dispute something, the credit bureau has 30 days to do their investigation. If they can't find any reason as to why that item is on your credit report, they should remove it and send you a corrected copy. Remember, if the item you are disputing is a negative item, disputing it isn't going to make it go away if the investigation proves the item is yours. Only the passage of time will eventually remove it. The older the item is, the less impact it has on your credit score.

For a complete understanding of your credit report consider scheduling a Credit Report Review session by calling 888-511-2227.

# Earning Extra Income

Sometimes when reviewing your monthly budget, you may find that additional income is needed. If you took on additional debt that you want to pay off quickly, or possibly a temporary crisis caused you to deplete savings or simply, your current income is not sufficient to meet all expenses, which have already been reduced significantly, there are some strategies to use to create additional income.

If your situation is one that more income is needed to meet monthly expenses, then a part time job in addition to your full time job may be necessary. There are ways to take on additional work while working full time. Most retail stores look for part time workers who can work in the evening or on the weekend. Working 20 hours a week at a part-time job paying \$9.00 per hour could have you netting almost \$7,000 annually. An additional \$7,000 will help pay off debt or increase savings.

Besides retail stores, there are other ways to add part time work to your schedule. Most sports arenas and stadiums hire seasonal workers. Typically, the hours for this type of employment fit well with a traditional, weekday full time job. If you have a particular skill, like the ability to make repairs, work as a handy man, or complete home remodeling projects, side work can help boost income.

There are some non traditional part time jobs that may help increase your income. If you're a teacher or especially skilled in a particular subject, consider tutoring students for an hourly fee. Offer to do dog walking in your community or pet sitting. If you like to write, look for freelance writing jobs via [www.freelancewriting.com](http://www.freelancewriting.com). Consider signing up to be a driver for companies like Uber or Lyft, where you can make your own schedule. Be sure to verify insurance requirements. Also, if you typically receive a large tax refund each year, examine your withholdings and make adjustments to receive more in your paycheck.

Sometimes, you might need additional income on a short-term basis. If that's the case, consider a yard sale to boost your income. Scour your house for items that you're not using, but that someone may find useful and organize a yard sale. Consider inviting neighbors to join in to reduce costs on advertising. Sometimes, taking out ads can be eliminated all together with signs in your community or by using social media sites to advertise the sale for free.

In addition to yard sales, consider online sites where you can sell unwanted electronic devices or unused gift cards. Websites like [www.gazelle.com](http://www.gazelle.com) will purchase used electronic devices. Sites like [giftcardgranny.com](http://giftcardgranny.com) will purchase unused gift cards at a reduced price. You will receive less than face value, but if you're not going to use the gift card, the lower price is worth it.

You may also want to consider selling your unwanted gold and silver jewelry. Companies will pay per ounce for your unwanted jewelry, which may end up being a significant amount depending on how much you have that you no longer wear.

If your need for extra income is more severe, consider selling any assets that you may have, like recreational vehicles, or a car. Relieving yourself of financial stress will reduce the trauma of parting with some of your assets.

If you're not sure where to start when it comes to determining how much extra money you may need each month, diligently keep track of your expenses to figure out where your money is going.

The temporary inconvenience of a part time job will most likely greatly benefit your finances and reduce your financial stress.

## Resources

[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)

[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

[www.advantageccs.org](http://www.advantageccs.org)

[www.onlinebudgetadvisor.com](http://www.onlinebudgetadvisor.com)

[www.gazelle.com](http://www.gazelle.com)

[www.giftcardgranny.com](http://www.giftcardgranny.com)

### The Advantage Challenge

*Advantage CCS challenges you to...follow a budget for back to school shopping. Watch the sale ads and compare prices between stores. Start early. Don't wait until the weekend before school starts. Figure out where you can get the best prices and make an effort to shop there. Track your back to school shopping expenses and then come up with a plan to start saving for next year's back to school shopping. Let us know what you do. Email [hmurray@advantageccs.org](mailto:hmurray@advantageccs.org)*

# Advantage

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