

Money Saving Ideas – especially for the cash-flow challenged. Some of these are great for all times, some are more useful for temporary measures.

- Shop around for lower insurance. At one point I found Liberty Mutual and 21<sup>st</sup> Century about half as expensive (for auto) as several others I looked at. Later I found Safeco was half as much Liberty Mutual, who had been edging up their prices. Liberty Mutual then offered to cut my rate – several hundred dollars, but not quite as much as Safeco
- Lower your coverage. That may not be ideal in some circumstances, but when you have to cut spending, that is an option.
- Raise your deductibles. Again, perhaps not ideal, but can help the cash flow. Changes like this can be temporary.
- On automobile insurance, drop the Personal Injury Protection. This is essentially just an expensive health insurance policy that only covers you when you are in your car, and under certain circumstances. If you have other forms of health insurance, then it can also be redundant. If you have no health insurance and still need to cut expenses somewhere, this is still a good candidate, since it is very unlikely it will provide any value.
- Use [www.gasbuddy.com](http://www.gasbuddy.com) to find out where the cheapest gas is that isn't out of your way. Assume the cost of travel is 25-50c per mile. Obviously it isn't worth driving an extra mile to save a penny per gallon, but for 10c a gallon, maybe. When gas prices are going up, QuickTrip stores' prices will often jump several hours a day before other stations. When you see that happen, if convenient, fill up at one of the cheaper places.
- Try ALDI food stores for shopping needs. Overall they tend to be cheaper. If you're disciplined with coupons, you may be able to do better at other stores. Beware of driving from one store to another to save on food costs, unless you know those savings outweigh the cost of gas.
- Check out High Yield Savings and Checking Accounts. If you have any money left, it is nice not only to avoid paying fees for your accounts, but also to get paid interest as well. There are several good accounts available. Do an internet search to find these. They are online-only accounts. One that I have used for years was originally called INGDirect, now CapitalOne360. The savings account pays better than most money markets and sometimes as good as many 6-month CDs. The checking account also pays interest. Neither have high minimums (probably \$50). Also with the checking account, you can have them mail checks for you and they pay the postage! Amazing. The CapitalOne360 Account links to your other checking accounts so you can easily transfer money from one to another.
- Adjust your thermostat. In cold times, keep it cooler. In warm times, keep it warmer. For example a 72 – 76 degree range is going to cost you a lot more than 68 - 72. If you have a programmable thermostat, use that to help conserve at appropriate times like when you are out of the house, or at night while you are sleeping. Perhaps lower the temperature on your water heater. Wash in cold water more often. Etc.
- Cancel your cable TV. This is *not* a necessity. If you must have TV, investigate how to get Network TV and/or go to NetFlix for movies (~\$9-\$25/month). If you don't have a TV that will already do NetFlix, then A Wii, Playstation 3, or Roku box, and other devices will work.

- Shop your internet provider. Maybe you have Verizon FIOS at the moment, which is awesome, but expensive. In the North Dallas area, you can get good high speed internet, 5Mbps or better from say AT&T DSL, or Time Warner Cable for \$20 - \$40 / month.
- Buy/sell on e-Bay and CraigsList or Amazon. Late 2011, I spent \$11 for two black ink cartridges that worked great, where one would cost me closer to \$20 in the store. When I had to move to an area that didn't have AT&T DSL, I used CraigsList to sell my previously required AT&T Gateway which was no longer useful to me.
- Check cell phone expenses. Drop to a cheaper plan if appropriate. I switched from AT&T ~\$80/mo (one phone) plan with limited minutes and no data to ~50/mo Straight Talk plan (running on the AT&T network,) with unlimited minutes and data, I had two others on the AT&T family plan (~\$135/mo) , but was able to switch everybody to smart phones on Straight Talk for ~\$150 (no savings, but much better value). Also look at dropping the phone insurance. Calculate how much it costs over time vs how often you're likely to use it. Often you'll find that a one-time cost of replacing your phone is less than the monthly cost of insuring it. If you're strapped for cash, this could be a good place to cut regardless – at least temporarily. If you're insuring a \$500 iPhone, then if it wasn't a gift from someone else, then likely you're not much in need of money saving ideas or (possibly and) you're being a bit foolish with your money.
- Drop your home phone, and only use cell phones, if you have and use cell phones already anyway. (Use Google phone online (or Skype) to call your cell phone if you've misplaced it in the house, or for other needs.)
- If and only if you are disciplined with credit cards and you can pay them off every month, then make all purchases that you can on a cash-back/rewards credit card. You should be able to get 1% or better cash-back on everything you buy – which is like saving 1% on everything. Doesn't sound like much, but things like your gas, food, electricity, internet, TV, etc. add up to \$1,000s of dollars per year. At just \$1,000 / month and just 1% cash-back, that's \$120 back in your pocket for no extra work. Again, this works ONLY if you are disciplined enough to ALWAYS pay off the credit card every month. One or two months interest and late fees will wipe out any cash-back benefit.
- Check out the thrift store for clothes and items. You can save yourself a chunk of change and support a charity at the same time.
- Unless you cut out all entertainment, look at options like the dollar movie, or matinees, and check different theaters. AMC tends to be very expensive, while Regal Entertainment has better matinee prices and hours. Frisbee golf is free, available at many parks, and good for exercise and enjoying a beautiful day.
- Use a passbook ([www.entertainment.com](http://www.entertainment.com)). These tend to cost about \$30 initially (Dallas area). There are numerous two-for one coupons in those, especially for restaurants, plus many other discounts. You can often get your money back in just one outing. The later it gets in the year, the cheaper these passbooks get. If you order online, you can still specify a charity to get credit.
- Check out Groupon (<http://www.groupon.com/r/uu166605> ) You can get some impressive deals here. One that I bought frequently was Studio Movie Grill : \$5 for movie and a drink.

- Miscellaneous: Here are some perhaps marginal ideas / strategies, but they can save some pennies and more importantly perhaps inspire you to other ideas,
  - Wait until the first day or two of the month after your car inspection expires to get it re-inspected (you have a 5 day grace period), then it is like getting a free inspection every 12 years.
  - For taxes, file an extension, then buy your tax software online from e-bay after the prices drop.