

"Empowering and educating people to improve their financial, physical, social, career, and community well being."

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# Ready, Set, Save!

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WINTER 2020

## Plan to recover from holiday spending

Holiday spending rose again this year which is sure to set a new record for consumer spending. This could be an indication of consumer confidence, but it's bad news for our budgets.

Recovering from overspending is very important for getting your finances back in line with your income.

This first step is to do damage control by checking your credit card balances and cash receipts to see what your total debt was for the holidays. Be sure to include your normal monthly spending so you can see what your overall spending was.

The next step is to take a hard look at your income and understand your take home

pay and then do a real budget (no estimating). Finding the right balance between your income and spending is key. Once you determine your overall net income for the month you can then calculate your normal spending for the month and then determine what is left over as discretionary money.

Now take a hard look at your credit card statements and review what your interest rate is for each card. Make a list of the company names, amounts owed and interest rate for each. Your statement of account provides a line item that tells you if you only pay the minimum payment each month how much you will end up paying in interest and how long it will take. So let that

motivate you to pay as much as you can each month to pay it off in a more timely manner which will save you a lot of money.

So here are some ways to save money so you can pay more on your credit cards:

- Brown bag your lunch
- Skip buying coffee on the go
- Coupon, coupon, coupon
- Sell items you don't need
- Get a part time job
- Cut back on recreation
- Meal plan to avoid over spending at the store
- Reduce your streaming
- Turn your thermostat down to save energy
- If you have to shop try a thrift store first



## Stay safe, warm and healthy this winter

There are several things to consider when preparing for the winter months. You need to take care of your property, your car(s) and yourself.

Get your car ready for cold weather by doing the following:

- Check your antifreeze
- Check the air in your tires
- Keep your gas tank as full as you can to avoid ice in

the tank or fuel lines

- Use a wintertime formula in your windshield washer

Prepare your home for winter:

- Drain water from outside faucets and sprinkler systems
- Disconnect your hose and cover outside faucets with foam insulators
- Protect your pipes that
- run through unheated areas of your home with insulation, such as attic, basement or garage
- Consider having your furnace inspected and change your filter
- Reverse direction of your ceiling fans
- Clean gutters and down spouts
- Inspect fireplace/chimney

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# Stay safe, warm and healthy

- Caulk windows and doors where needed
- Stock up on cold weather essentials like batteries, ice melt, sand, fire extinguishers, food and water

It's also important to take care of yourself and prepare your body for winter. Here are some items to consider:

- Take krill oil. Did you know that moisturizing on the inside is just as important and moisturizing on the outside?
- Moisturize with purpose. A rich moisturizer is a must
- Warm up to work out
- Pop some zinc, it helps prevent colds
- Spice up your dinner (certain spices can actually warm you up from the inside out)
- Also ginger, cayenne or

cinnamon help increase circulation and warm you up as well

- Boost the humidity in your home/office (adding moisture can help relieve things like sinus congestion, coughing and dry or irritated throat)
- Get vitamin D—vitamin D comes from sunlight but it can be hard to get enough in the winter months). Taking vitamin D can boost bone health and reducing your risk of all kinds of chronic diseases

Taking care of yourself will help keep the winter blues away and sniffles at bay.

Be mindful of your mood. Winter can increase disorders like depression. Pay close attention to your state of mind and check in on your family, friends and

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neighbors for signs of depression. Staying social is important in helping you ward off depression. But keep in mind that in-real-life networks are best. Staying social does not have to be expensive; plan a potluck with those who may be experiencing a little too much alone time.

Following a few of these suggested guidelines will help you form a plan of attack to make this the best winter you've weathered yet. Share your tips and tricks with family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. By helping out others you are helping yourself.



# Get ready for 2019 TAX filing

## Tax withholding: How to get it right

An employer generally withholds income tax from employees' paychecks and pays it to the IRS on their behalf. The amount withheld is based on the amount of income earned and three types of information given to the employer on your W-4. You told your employer your filing status, the number of allowances you want to claim and any additional withholdings you want taken out of each paycheck. Now it is time

to think about reviewing what you told them and making changes if necessary. By doing this checkup each year, you can get the refund you want next year. If you happen to owe, boosting tax withholding is the best way to head off a tax bill next year. You should also check your withholding when a major life event occurs or if your income changes. You can check your withholding amount by using the tax

withholding estimator on IRS.gov. This tool helps you to determine whether you need to give your employer a new Form W-4. You can use the estimator to help you fill out the new form and adjust your income tax withholding. Don't give the form to the IRS, it needs to go to your employer. Visit IRS.gov for other resources. If you have a tax accountant you trust, they can also assist you.

# Identity theft services

## Be proactive—Don't wait for it to happen

Every two seconds another person is a victim of identity theft. In 2018 alone, 16.7 million people in the US were attacked which totaled more than \$16 billion in losses. Part of that reason is the increase of online shopping. Data breaches (your personal records are exposed) are also increasing so yes, we are all at risk.

Given this fact, it might make sense to consider exploring options to protect yourself. There are five award winning identity theft service providers for you to review:

1. Identity Guard
2. LifeLock
3. Norton LifeLock
4. Panda Security

### 5. Identity Force

Top10.com did the research on these providers in an effort to help consumers make informed decisions by reviewing their products and services. Visit their website for all the details.

Is an ID theft protection tool worth the investment? If you are looking for a firm layer of security to make you feel safer while online shopping, paying your bills online or sharing your personal information, then YES. Many of them offer free trial periods of up to 30 days, or discounts on your first annual subscription.

The best ID theft services on the market utilize unique data and

advanced technologies to monitor your credit card transactions., the dark web, social media, and more. Their goal is to immediately detect when your information has been stolen, offered for sale, or used fraudulently.

Once you are alerted about an attack, these service providers will help restore your identity, reimburse you for stolen funds, and offer their expert support around the clock. Be sure and read the fine print and review the features and capabilities offered by each of them.

With so much activity taking place online your personal information is “up for grabs.” It’s your identity-protect it!

# Vacation planning for 2020

The holiday season is over, but it's never too soon to start planning for the next one. Did you know that vacations are better holiday gifts for children rather than toys? Did you know that traveling with your kids will make them do better in school? In fact, some psychologists say that vacations makes kids smarter. Apparently, vacations can advance brain development in children. When you take your child on a trip, you are supporting their explorative urge. Vacations take us out of our everyday stress and allow us as a family to create memories and just have FUN!

Vacations are also a good way to explore new food. When you travel to new areas most often there is local

food offered that everyone can try. It's a fun experiment you can do together while making a memory. It's a collaborative fun time you will all enjoy.

So perhaps a family meeting is in order. Get everyone together and explore the idea of a vacation for your next holiday instead of “things.” It's a great opportunity to explore together, to find someplace that is exciting for everyone.

Once you decide on a place, you can all do a budget together to see what it will cost. Then you can take a hard look at your current budget and work together to make some alterations which will allow you to save for the upcoming planned vacation. The budget is a great

learning opportunity for the kids to see where the household money goes and how to save for the things you want instead of using credit.

You can get them excited about saving also. Perhaps they will offer to have a bake sale, yard sale or even get a summer job to help. Print out pictures of everything you all want to do on the vacation and post them in common areas of the home to keep everyone excited and encouraged. Happy travels!





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## Budget Recipe: Sweet n' Spicy Chicken Bowls

Total cost is about \$6.05 and serves 4

Ingredients:

Spice Mix

- 1 tsp mild chili powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
- Freshly cracked pepper to taste
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 1/2 tsp apple cider vinegar

Rice

- 1 cup uncooked brown rice
- 1 3/4 cup chicken broth

Bowl Ingredients

- 1 boneless skinless chicken breast
- 1 8oz. can pineapple tidbits in juice
- 1 15oz. can black beans
- 1 ripe avocado
- 2 green onions
- 1/4 bunch cilantro (optional)

1. Begin by cooking the rice. Combine the uncooked rice and chicken broth in a small pot. Place lid on top and bring to a boil over high heat. As soon as it reaches full boil, turn the heat down to low and let simmer for 20-25 minutes. After 20-25 minutes,

turn off and let set undisturbed, with lid in place for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork.

2. Prepare the honey spice mix by combining the chili powder, cumin, garlic, smoked paprika, cayenne, cracked pepper, salt, honey, olive oil, and apple cider vinegar in a bowl.
3. Chop the chicken breast into small pieces. Add it to the bowl with honey spice mix and toss to coat. Set the seasoned meat aside while you prepare the rest of the bowl ingredients.
4. Rinse and drain the black beans. Drain the pineapple, then chop the tidbits into smaller pieces. Slice the green onions. Rinse and roughly chop the cilantro. Cut the avocado in half, then use a pairing knife to slice or cube the flesh.
5. Heat a large non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add the chopped and seasoned chicken pieces and sauté until cooked through and slightly browned (5-7 minutes).
6. Build the bowls by adding 3/4 cup of cooked rice to each bowl, followed by 1/4 cup of each of the following:

cooked chicken, black beans, pineapple, avocado, green onions and cilantro.

Note: Try to buy chicken breasts when they go on sale for \$1.99/lb. (which they do about once or twice per month). You can even prepare and store in the freezer until ready to use.



The source for this recipe is: <https://www.budgetbytes.com/sweet-n-spicy-chicken-bowls/>