

For the next month, track your expenses to get a clearer picture of where your money goes. To start, just use the categories we've listed below and add your own as you go. Or you can go back to previous months with your receipts, bank and credit card statements and create your list of categories based on your actual spending history, then fill in expenses for the month. If you have certain expenses but they tend to cluster rather than be spent month to month, put these down under the "yearly" column.

Before you begin, follow these 5 simple guidelines to make the process easier for you.

Five Simple Guidelines:

1. Pay cash only as necessary.
2. Save all your cash receipts and enter these expenses in their appropriate categories.
3. Use your checkbook or debit card ledger as an expense tracker.
4. Use your credit card statement as a tracking device (and your credit card only for purchases you intend to pay off that month, if possible).
5. Be sure to keep your pay stub from work (and any other income sources).

Now gather up your receipts every day and keep them with your bank and credit card statements. At the end of each day or each week during the month, add up the totals by category and jot down your amounts on the worksheet. Then at the end of the month, add up those totals and put the figures in by category below. Add whatever categories you need to make the record complete.



Spending Record

FOR: _____
 DATE: _____

SPENDING PLAN	MONTHLY\$	YEARLY\$
HOUSING (Probably your biggest monthly outlay)		
Mortgage/rent		
Real estate taxes		
Gas		
Electric		
Water/sewer		
Phone/Internet		
Cable/satellite		
Trash collection		
Home repairs/maintenance		
AUTO (Usually a close second)		
Car loan/lease payment		
Gasoline		
License tabs		
Repairs/maintenance		
OTHER TRANSPORTATION (Plus the cost of a good book)		
Bus		
Train		
FOOD (Hey, you gotta eat)		
Groceries		
Eating out		
Work Lunches		
School lunches		
CLOTHES (Optional, but highly recommended)		
Adult(s)		
Kid(s)		
ENTERTAINMENT (Budget for those needed fun-breaks)		
Movies/sporting events		
Recreation		
Other		
KID'S ACTIVITIES (If you've got 'em)		
School		
Lessons		
Camp		
Sports		
Allowance		

SPENDING PLAN	MONTHLY\$	YEARLY\$
CHARITY (Gifts to yourself don't count)		
Donations		
MEDICAL/DENTAL (On top of work benefits)		
Premiums		
Co-pays		
Prescriptions		
Vitamins		
INSURANCE (Make sure your assets are covered)		
Auto		
Life		
Health		
Home		
Disability		
Long-term care		
PERSONAL (Those little things sure add up)		
Dry cleaning/laundry		
Haircuts/etc.		
Subscriptions		
Health Club Membership		
Gifts		
SAVINGS (YES! YES! YES!)		
Retirement savings*		
Vacations		
Emergency Saving Acct.		
DEBT PAYMENTS (Wouldn't it be nice if these were blank?)		
Student loans		
Home equity loan		
Credit cards		
Other debt		
OTHER (Don't leave anything out!)		
TOTAL:	\$	

*If you put away your own retirement savings, enter the amount. If it's automatically deducted from your paycheck, skip it.