



NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR  
CREDIT COUNSELING

*Knowing the difference can  
make all the difference.*

## ***NFCC PRESS RELEASE***

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### ***NFCC Offers Tips for Getting Your Financial House in Order Getting Started Now is Key to Success***

**Silver Spring, MD** – A few simple steps can make a dramatic difference in one's financial life, and there's no better time than now to get pointed in the right direction. The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) recommends that consumers review where they are in order to determine where they're headed, and encourages them to consider implementing the following tips.

- **Get organized.** It doesn't matter if it's a full-blown home office or a shoebox, put all of your financial papers in one place. This will save you time, as you'll never have to search for misplaced documents.
- **Commit to visiting your financial center at least once each week.** Review any bills that have arrived, noting their due date. Plan to mail the payment 7 to 10 business days in advance of the due date if using traditional mail. Write the date that the bill needs to be mailed underneath where the stamp will go. File in chronological order and mail on time to avoid any late fees.
- **Consider online bill paying through your bank.** This is particularly useful for people who travel, are forgetful, or are procrastinators. The system is ideal for payments that are the same each month such as car and mortgage payments.
- **Balance your checkbook each time you make a deposit.** This should go a long way toward preventing overdrafts and incurring unnecessary fees.
- **Reconcile your bank statement the day it arrives.** This is not a task that anyone looks forward to, but it's easier to tackle it one month at a time rather than spending hours chasing down that penny from several months back.
- **Create a budget.** Call it a spending plan if that is more palatable. Contrary to what many think, a budget isn't restrictive. It actually allows you to spend your hard-earned money the way you want to, often stretching it even farther. Most importantly, it puts you in control of your finances.
- **Track your spending.** It's not the large expenses that trip us up. It's the small things, and the periodic payments. Commit to writing down every cent you spend for 30 days. Go back and review your expenses to see how much you were over or under your projected spending for each category in your budget. Since you're now in control of your money, you can make the necessary changes to stay on track.
- **Start saving.** Put 10 percent of your take-home pay into an interest bearing account each

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month and forget it's there. This is your emergency fund. Promise yourself that you will not pull any money out short of a true emergency.

- **Find money to save.** Your budget's already tight, so where are you going to find the money to begin saving? Devote any windfall money to savings. This includes raises, bonuses, and birthday checks from Aunt Hazel.
- **Contribute the maximum to your company's retirement plan.** The maximum commitment is your goal, but short of that, make sure that you're contributing at least the amount the company will match. If not, you're throwing away free money.
- **Have an insurance check-up.** No one wants to be over-insured or under-insured. Schedule an annual visit with your insurance provider to make sure your policies are in line with your needs.
- **Tackle debt.** It is likely that credit card debt is preventing you from achieving many of your goals. When you're in a financial hole, stop digging. This means no more charging. It is impossible to become debt free while still adding to your debt load each month. Make your purchases with cash or a debit card. This way, when the money's gone, the spending stops.
- **Review your credit report.** Americans are allowed one free credit report from each of the major bureaus every 12 months. Go to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) to access the reports online. Caution: there are many bogus sites with similar addresses trying to steal your personal information. Go to this site and only this site.

The NFCC provides this list of a baker's dozen tips in hopes that it encourages consumers to get their financial house in order. Professional assistance is available from an NFCC member agency. To find the agency closest to you, go call 1-800-388-2227 or go online to [www.nfcc.org](http://www.nfcc.org).

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*The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC), founded in 1951, is the nation's largest and longest serving national nonprofit credit counseling organization. The NFCC's mission is to promote the national agenda for financially responsible behavior and build capacity for its members to deliver the highest quality financial education and counseling services. NFCC members annually help more than two million consumers through 911 community-based offices nationwide. For free and affordable confidential advice through a reputable NFCC member, call 1-800-388-2227, (en Español 1-800-682-9832) or visit [www.nfcc.org](http://www.nfcc.org).*