



# CENTS & SENSIBILITY



A Guide to  
Money Management





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**A Note to the Reader:** This book was initially created to respond to a need for financial education in the disability community. However, we have learned that everyone can benefit from this information. Our goal is to provide you with the tools needed to make informed decisions about your financial future.

*Disclaimer:* The websites, apps, organizations, companies, and resources referred to throughout this book are for informational purposes only. Their inclusion does not imply a recommendation or endorsement by PATF. In addition, PATF has not received any compensation for mentioning any of the aforesaid.

# Let's Get Started

# Chapter 1

## Is This Book for You?

Are you a resident of Pennsylvania? Do you want to learn more about managing your money? If you said yes to both questions, this book is for you. **The key is to manage your money, instead of letting your money manage you.**

Everyone needs financial skills to make smart decisions about money. When you first start to manage your own money, there are some important things you need to know to be sure you can get what you need to live independently.

### In this book we will cover:

- Looking at how you spend your money now,
- Developing a livable money map (budget) that includes a plan for spending and saving,
- Learning how to save (even if you are a recipient of government benefits),
- Deciding where to keep your money, and
- Learning the best way to borrow money if you need to.

The activities in this book provide a step-by-step process to 1) organize your money, and 2) manage your money. Getting a handle on your finances is not something you learn in a couple of hours. The organization step alone may take weeks to learn! But the skills you learn will stay with you for the rest of your life.

At the end of this book you will find a list of words (a glossary) to explain many of the terms used in this book. Go to page 84 to look up terms you don't understand.

**Kevin is excited about planning for his financial future!**



## You will also learn about assistive technology (AT):

- What is AT and why is it important?
- How can you pay for AT?

## Activities in this Chapter

➡ Activity # 1 *What I Need and What I Want*

➡ Activity # 2 *My Money Habits*

➡ Activity # 3 *Smart Money Habits*

### Need

Something you must have to survive, like a place to live and enough food to eat.

### Want

Something you might like to have, but you don't need it to survive and you don't have to have right away. You can save to have it later.

### Values

Values are those ideas and beliefs that really matter to each of us.

## The Difference Between Needs and Wants

Here's a good rule about money: It is very important to put your needs first. That's why it is important to know the difference between your needs and your wants. Before you start planning how to use your money, let's be clear about the difference between needs and wants.

- A **need** is something you must have to survive, like a place to live and enough food to eat.
- A **want** is something you might like to have, but not something you must have to survive. You also don't have to have a want right away. You can save to have it later.

## What Are Your Money Values?

Your **values** are those ideas and beliefs that really matter to you. Your values will determine what you will do with your money. Asking yourself, "How do I use my money now?" will tell you a lot about your money values.

People use money two ways:

1. To *buy* things they need or want *now*.
2. To *save* for things they may need or want *later*.

It's not about how much money you have, but how you use your money. It is all about the choices you make.

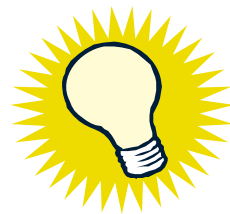
### Meet Penny Pincher

Hi! I've got some good ideas that can help you understand the concepts in this book. Follow me as we go through the chapters together.



## Activity #1: What I Need and What I Want

List your needs in the spaces below. Think of things you need (must have) to survive, like a place to live, food to eat, or clothes to wear. And, don't forget healthcare! Next, list some of the things you want (tickets to a concert, going out to dinner, or a new TV).



### REMEMBER

Here's a good rule about money. When you are spending money, *it is important to put your needs first*. That's why it helps to know the difference between your needs and your wants.

#### My Needs

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### My Wants

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Money Habits

Once you've developed a plan for your financial future, you'll feel more in charge and in control of your money. Before starting on your plan, look at what your money habits are today.

## Activity #2: My Money Habits

Read each line below and circle the response that sounds like you.

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. I have a spending plan or budget.                      | Yes | No |
| 2. I track my spending every month.                       | Yes | No |
| 3. I pay my bills on time or before the due date.         | Yes | No |
| 4. I have money in a bank or credit union.                | Yes | No |
| 5. I pay my credit card balance in full every month.      | Yes | No |
| 6. I know the total amount of any debts I have.           | Yes | No |
| 7. I have seen my credit report in the past 12 months.    | Yes | No |
| 8. I save money every month.                              | Yes | No |
| 9. I could pay for an unexpected expense today if had to. | Yes | No |

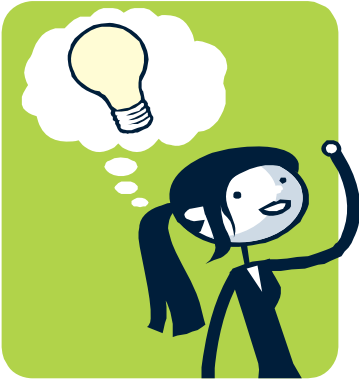
Are there any NO answers above that might make it hard for you to achieve your financial goals? Take some time to think about this.



### Penny Pincher Says!

Changing your money habits takes time. Don't get discouraged.

### Activity #3: Smart Money Habits



#### Penny Pincher Says!

Sometimes it's difficult to save for things you need, but once you try saving, it may be easier than you think.

Most people would say that the habits listed above are good ones to have. Make a list of any money habits from # 1–9 that you don't have now, but would like to develop. Make a promise to yourself to start right now.

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Keep these ideas about money values and habits in mind as you move to the next chapters.

#### Realizing the Benefit of Saving

Winter was coming and Raul needed a new pair of boots but he was having a hard time figuring out where he would get the money.



**Raul and Lucy love hanging out at the book store in the mall.**

Raul and his friend, Lucy, loved to go to the mall on Saturdays. They would take the bus and meet at the food court. Raul realized they were spending \$10 or more on sodas, burgers and fries. "Hey Lucy," he said, "I'm going to eat before leaving home. That way, I can save money for a new pair of winter boots."

Raul loved eating at the food court but his winter boots had holes in them. He realized that if he started saving the money that he spent on fast food he could easily achieve his goal of buying new boots in a month or two.



# Money Mapping: Get Ready to Budget

## Chapter 2

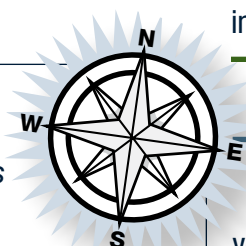
Our goal in this chapter is to learn how to create a money map. **Money mapping** captures many activities involved in money management. It includes understanding your income and tracking your expenses, establishing short and long-term savings and spending goals, and building good credit so that you can be more in charge of your future.

Money mapping is all about forward thinking, setting the direction of your money goals. It is the new and improved term for “budgeting.” Money mapping encourages a more fluid process, allowing you to always be thinking about the next step in your forward moving plan.

To make a money map you need to know your **income** (money coming in) and your **expenses** (money going out). The difference between your income and expenses is called cash flow. **Cash flow** can be either positive or negative. If you have a positive cash flow, that means you have more money coming in than you spend. (This is also called a surplus. See page 24.) If you have a negative cash flow, you have more money going out than you have coming in. (This is also called a deficit. See page 24.) A negative cash flow is not a good thing! Many people who have negative cash flows were able to fix the problem through monthly money mapping...you can too!

### Activities in This Chapter

- Activity #4 Calculate Your Monthly Income
- Activity #5 Track Expenses: Keep Cash Receipts
- Activity #6 Organize Your Cash Expenses
- Activity #7 Organize Your Recurring Monthly Expenses
- Activity #8 Organize Your Credit Card Charges
- Activity #9 Bring It All Together!
- Activity #10 Comparison Shopping



#### Money Mapping

Money mapping is the new term for budgeting, and involves understanding your income and tracking your expenses, establishing short and long-term savings and spending goals, and building good credit.

#### Income

Money coming in.

#### Expenses

Money going out.

#### Cash Flow

The difference between your income and your expenses.

#### Get in the Zone!

When you see this compass, you'll know you're in the Money Mapping Zone—the activity you're working on is helping you take the next step along the path of your personal money map!



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### **Penny Pincher Says!**

211 has a team of trained specialists available 24/7 to help you access the best local resources and services to address any of your needs. Examples include supplemental food programs, access to health care, and emergency information. Just call 211!

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### **Earned income**

The money you receive from a job.

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### **Unearned income**

The money you receive that does not come from a job.

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### **Benefits**

Many people need help paying for food, housing, utilities, medical care and other basic items. The state and federal governments have developed programs that can help pay for these things. These programs are called government benefits.

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Examples of completed worksheets are included after each activity for you to use as a reference. The worksheets will help you:

- First, figure out how much money you receive each month,
- Then, know how you are currently spending your money, and
- Finally, work out how much money you have left over each month.

## **My Monthly Income and Spending**

Three things happen when you use a money map:

1. You understand how and where you spend your money.
2. You become more aware of your cash flow.
3. You control your finances and your future.

### ***Speaking of Income***

There are basically two types of income, earned income and unearned income.

- **Earned income** is wages or salary you receive from a job. You may be paid weekly, every other week, bi-monthly, or monthly.
- **Unearned income** is money you receive that does not come from a job. It may come from **benefits** or gifts, such as:
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI),
  - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI),
  - Workers' compensation,
  - Veteran benefits,
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamps) stamps),
  - Gifts from family or friends, or
  - Interest earned on savings.

You might even have a source of unearned income that's not on this list.

If you have earned income, you already know that you don't get to keep all that you make because you have to pay taxes!

**Kimiko is holding her paycheck.**





## Gross Earnings

The term **gross earnings** means the total amount of money received before taxes and other deductions are taken from your paycheck. Many workers can figure out their gross earnings by taking the number of hours they work and multiplying by their hourly pay rate. For workers who receive a salary, they earn a fixed amount regardless of the hours they work.

## Net Earnings

The term **net earnings** means the amount you take home after taxes and other deductions have been taken out of your gross earnings. Let's look at some common deductions:

- Federal income tax: this money goes to the federal government to pay for things like national defense, health care, roads and parks.
- State income tax: this money goes to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to pay for things like schools, health clinics, museums and libraries.
- Local wage tax: this money goes to your city or township where you live, to pay for things like the fire department, the police and community projects.
- Social Security tax: this money goes to pay for retirement, disability, and survivorship benefits.
- Medicare tax: this money supports health care for seniors and some people with permanent disabilities.
- Health insurance premiums: this money pays for your health care benefits if offered by your employer.
- Retirement benefits: this money goes into a separate fund that pays you benefits when you retire.

When figuring out how much money you have to spend each month, always use your net earnings.

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### Gross earnings

The total amount of your earned income.

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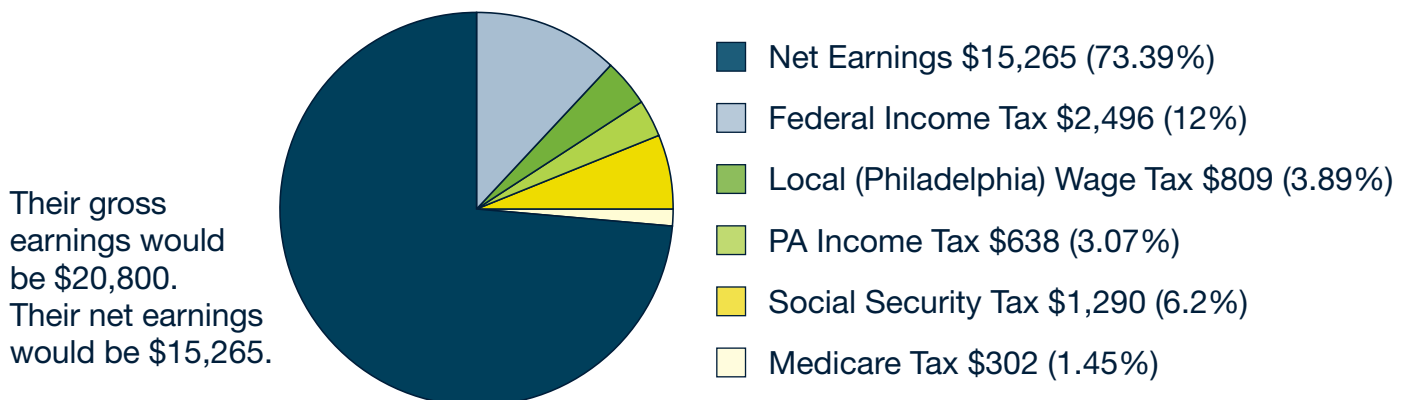
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### Net earnings

The amount you take home, after taxes and other deductions have been taken out of your total (gross) earnings.

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**Assume an individual had an annual income of \$20,800 (\$10/hour) in 2018 and filed taxes as a single person living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.**





### Penny Pincher Says!

- To find out if you are eligible for government benefits, check out COMPASS, [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us), or call 1-800-692-7462.
- Make sure that you have the correct amount of Federal income tax withheld from your paycheck. The IRS has a withholding calculator that can help determine how much tax should come out of the money you earn at <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/IRS-Withholding-Calculator>.
- You can increase the amount of your tax refund through tax credits and deductions. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers free help with preparing tax returns to people who make \$55,000 or less. VITA programs can be found at community centers, libraries, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. To find VITA assistance in your area call 1-800-906-9887.

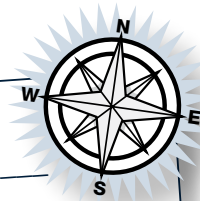
## Activity #4: Calculate Your Monthly Income

In this activity you create a list of where your income comes from.

Step 1: Write down the name of each type of income you get monthly.

Step 2: Enter the total monthly amount for each one.

Step 3: Add up your total monthly income.



### My Monthly Income for the Month of \_\_\_\_\_

Income Description	Amount
1. _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____
<b>Total Monthly Income</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

### EXAMPLE: Monthly Income for SEPTEMBER

Income Description	Amount
1. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	\$ 600.00
2. SNAP (food stamps)	\$ 150.00
3. Part-time job	\$ 200.00
<b>Total Monthly Income</b>	<b>\$ 950.00</b>

Now it's time to organize the things you spend your money on! **Expenses** are what you spend money on, whether you pay in cash or with a check, charge to a credit card, or use a debit card.

Don't get discouraged if you can't figure out exactly what you spend your money on every month. It may take several months to get a really good picture of your spending.

## Activity #5: Track Expenses: Keep Cash Receipts

To figure out how you spend your money, you should begin by saving your cash receipts for at least one month.

Keep the receipt for anything you buy with cash in a container. An accordion file works great to keep things organized. You can also scan your receipts and store them electronically. If you didn't get a receipt then write a note to yourself about what you spent and how much it cost and file it away.

At the end of the month, gather all your receipts and sort them into categories. Make a pile of receipts for each category, such as:

- Groceries;
- Personal care items, like toothpaste and soap;
- Eating out at restaurants or take out;
- Transportation, like bus tickets, taxis, gas or tolls;
- Clothing;
- Entertainment, like movie tickets, cable TV or CDs; and
- Health insurance co-pays.

Add up the amount of money you spent in each pile of receipts. Now that you have saved your cash receipts, move on to Activity #6.



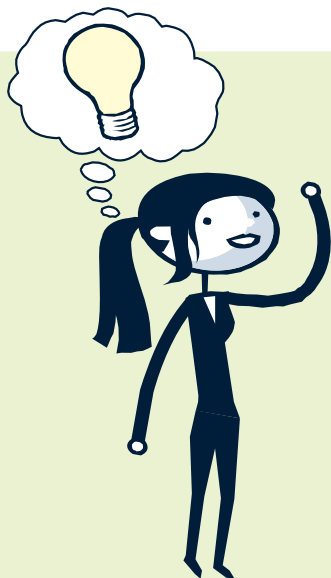
### Expenses

What you spend money on, whether you pay in cash or with a check, credit card or debit card.



### Penny Pincher Says!

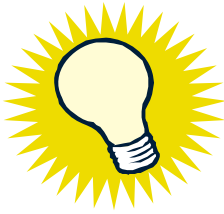
There are lots of ways to track your expenses to help you create a monthly budget. *A Monthly Budget Planner: Sort Your \$hit Out* by JAD Budget Planner Books is a book that will carry you from January through December, with a week-by-week breakdown of every month and questions to help you reflect along the way.



### Penny Pincher Says!

You can keep your receipts in a file. It's important that you keep every receipt for any purchase, not just those made with cash.





### REMEMBER

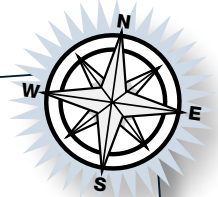
You can check the glossary at the back of the book to learn unfamiliar terms.

## Activity #6: Organize Your Cash Expenses

In this activity, you list your cash expenses and decide whether each one is a need or a want. You'll use this information later when you put together your money map.

Step 1: Name each expense category and check either need or want for the expense.

Step 2: Write the amount you spent in each category next to the item.



### My Cash Expenses for the Month of \_\_\_\_\_

Expense Description	Need	Want	Amount
1. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
2. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
3. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
4. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
5. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
6. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____

### EXAMPLE: Cash Expenses for SEPTEMBER

Expense Description	Need	Want	Amount
1. Personal care items from drug store	X		\$ 7.65
2. Meals eaten out		X	\$ 9.20
3. Groceries from supermarket	X		\$150.00
4. Doctor visit co-pay	X		\$ 25.00

Activities #7 and #8 create two more lists:  
"Monthly Expenses" and "Credit Card Charges."

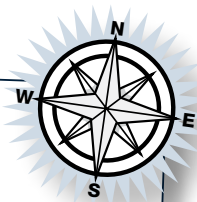
The good news is that you don't have to wait a month to create these lists.

## Activity #7: Organize Your Recurring Monthly Expenses

Make a list of your fixed recurring monthly expenses and decide whether each expense is a need or a want. Recurring expenses are expenses that keep happening in the same way month after month. You'll use this information later when you put together your money map.

Step 1: List each expense and check either need or want.

Step 2: Write the amount you spent next to the expense.



**My Fixed Recurring Monthly Expenses for the Month of \_\_\_\_\_**

Expense Description	Need	Want	Amount
1. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
2. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
3. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
4. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
5. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
6. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____

**EXAMPLE: Fixed Recurring Monthly Expenses for SEPTEMBER**

Expense Description	Need	Want	Amount
1. Rent	X		\$400.00
2. Utilities*	X		\$ 74.00
3. Telephone	X		\$ 20.00
4. Student loan payment	X		\$ 50.00

\* Utilities are services such as electricity, gas, water and heating oil.



## Activity #8: Organize Your Credit Card Charges

### Credit Card

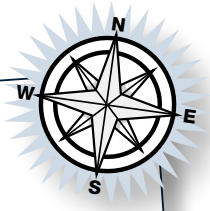
A credit card allows you to purchase items now, and pay for them later. We'll be talking a lot more about credit cards in Chapter 6.

In this activity you create a list of **credit card** charges and decide whether each item on the statement is a need or a want. You'll use this information later when you put together your money map.

Don't put anything on this list that you included in your Recurring Monthly Expenses. This is the easiest of the lists to create. Your credit card statements list all of the charges.

Step 1: List each charge and check whether it is either a need or want.

Step 2: Write the amount you spent next to the charge.



### My Credit Card Charges for the Month of \_\_\_\_\_

Charge Description	Need	Want	Amount
1. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
2. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
3. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
4. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
5. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____
6. _____	_____	_____	\$ _____

### EXAMPLE: Credit Card Charges for SEPTEMBER

Charge Description	Need	Want	Amount
1. Groceries	X		\$ 10.00
2. Birthday gift for Mom		X	\$ 45.00
3. Concert tickets		X	\$ 50.00
4. DVDs		X	\$ 26.50

## Activity #9: Bring It All Together!

The information you use to build your “Personal Statement of Monthly Income and Spending” comes from the lists you made in Activities #6 on page 10, #7 on page 11, and #8 on page 12.

Step 1: Copy all of the items checked “need” onto the list with the amount spent on each need.

Step 2: Total the amount spent on your needs.

Step 3: Copy all of the items checked “want” onto the list with the amount spent on each one.

Step 4: Total the amount spent on your wants.

Step 5: Add your total needs to your total wants.

Step 6: Enter the amount of your monthly income from Activity #4.

Step 7: Subtract the total of your needs and wants (Step 5) from your monthly income (Step 6) to determine your cash flow.



### Penny Pincher Says!

You can also use online resources to help you track your income and spending. One example is <https://www.mint.com>.

## Calculating an Alternate Route

DJ's son was ready to move out on his own. But he wasn't sure he could afford it.

DJ and Sergei sat down to create a money map. They found that, with Sergei's current income and expenses, adding the expense of a new apartment would mean he would have a negative cash flow—he would be spending more on his expenses than he was receiving in income.

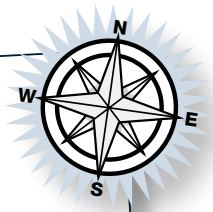
Sergei figured he could either reduce his spending by making his own food and eating out with friends less often, or try to find a roommate to help cover the extra expenses. He decided

he could make his meals at home and hang out with his friends after he had eaten. But after a month of the new routine, he realized he really missed eating out with his friends. He resolved to find a roommate who could help contribute to rent and household expenses.

By decreasing his monthly expenses, Sergei has a positive cashflow, and he is becoming fast friends with his new roommate.



**DJ creates her own money map to plan for her monthly expenses. She makes a shopping list using her Amazon Echo to help her avoid making impulse purchases at the grocery store.**



## My Personal Statement of Income and Spending for the Month of \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 1: My Needs

Description

Amount

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 2. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 3. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 4. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 5. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 6. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 7. _____ | \$ _____ |

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2: My Total Needs

### Step 3: My Wants

Description

Amount

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 2. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 3. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 4. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 5. _____ | \$ _____ |
| 6. _____ | \$ _____ |

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 4: My Total Wants

### Step 5: My Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)

### Step 6: My Total Monthly Income

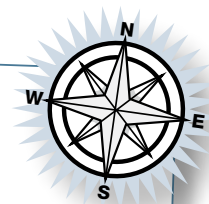
### Step 7: My Cash Flow (Income - Expenses)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_



## EXAMPLE 1: Personal Statement of Income and Spending for SEPTEMBER

### Step 1: Needs

Description	Amount
1. Personal care items from drug store	\$ 7.65
2. Groceries from supermarket	\$160.00
3. Doctor visit co-pay	\$ 25.00
4. Rent	\$400.00
5. Utilities	\$ 74.00
6. Telephone	\$ 20.00
7. Student loan payment	\$ 50.00
<b>Step 2: Total Needs</b>	<b>\$736.65</b>

### Step 3: Wants

Description	Amount
8. Birthday gift for Mom	\$ 45.00
9. Meals eaten out	\$ 9.20
10. Concert tickets	\$ 50.00
11. DVDs	\$ 26.50
<b>Step 4: Total Wants</b>	<b>\$130.70</b>

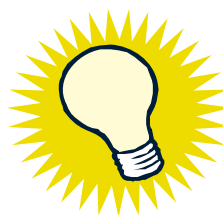
**Step 5: Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)** **\$867.35**

**Step 6: Total Monthly Income** **\$950.00**

**Step 7: Cash Flow (Income – Expenses)** **\$ 82.65**

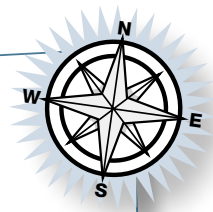
*Do you make more than you spend,  
OR do you spend more than you make?*

In the example above, after expenses (spending) of \$867.35 are subtracted from income (money in) of \$950, there is \$82.65 left over (a positive cash flow). If this were your real statement, it would be great news! You would have \$82.65 to use for saving for some of your other needs or wants.



### REMEMBER

Some expenses will remain the same from month to month, such as rent payments. These expenses are called fixed expenses. Other expenses will change from month to month; these are referred to as variable expenses.



## EXAMPLE 2: Personal Statement of Income and Spending for SEPTEMBER

### Step 1: Needs

Description	Amount	
	\$ 7.65	
1. Personal care items from drug store	\$160.00	
2. Groceries from supermarket	\$ 25.00	
3. Doctor visit co-pay	\$400.00	
4. Rent	\$ 74.00	
5. Utilities	\$ 20.00	
6. Telephone	\$ 50.00	
7. Student loan payment		\$736.65

### Step 2: Total Needs

### Step 3: Wants

Description	Amount	
	\$ 45.00	
8. Birthday gift for Mom	\$ 9.20	
9. Meals eaten out	\$ 50.00	
10. Concert tickets	\$ 26.50	
11. DVDs	\$ 90.00	
12. A second pair of sneakers		\$220.70

### Step 4: Total Wants

	\$957.35
<b>Step 5: Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)</b>	\$950.00

### Step 6: Total Monthly Income

(−\$ 7.35)

### Step 7: Cash Flow (Income – Expenses)

The only difference between this example and Example 1 (page 15) is that this example includes an expense for a second pair of sneakers. After expenses (spending) of \$957.35 are subtracted from income (money coming in) of \$950, there is a shortage of \$7.35 (a negative cash flow)!

If you're spending more than your total income, you need to go back and look at your spending. Where can you reduce your spending? Start with your wants. Could you spend less on clothing? Could you eat out less often?



## To Spend Or Not To Spend? Now, *That's* A Really Good Question!

The pressure to spend your money is all around you—ads are on TV, at the movies, in the newspapers, and at the grocery store. Your money has to be used to pay for ALL of your needs, and SOME of your wants, so it's really important to be a smart spender. Here's some advice:

- Take a shopping list with you and try to stick to it.
- Use coupons and look for sales.
- Don't go food shopping when you're hungry.
- Don't shop to cheer yourself up (no "retail therapy").

Stores and advertisers don't want you to STOP and THINK before spending, but you MUST! Ask yourself these questions before making a purchase:

- Do I really need this? Will I wear it or use it?
- If I buy this, will I be able to pay my bills?
- Should I wait a day or two and think it over?
- Should I wait until it goes on sale?
- Could I find it for a better price someplace else?

### Tipping

What is a tip? A tip is a small amount of money given to someone for providing a service, whether they're serving you a meal in a restaurant, cutting your hair, or carrying your bags up to your hotel room. In many places the federal minimum wage for adults is around \$7.25 per hour. In establishments like restaurants, though, employers are legally allowed to pay their staff wages as low as \$2.83 an hour (in PA), with the assumption that they'll make the rest of their earnings in tips.

So, before you think about not leaving a tip, remember that the waiter is working hard to make your experience as enjoyable as possible. American custom suggests that you should leave a tip of 15% to 20% of the full amount before tax is added, depending on how satisfied you were with the service.

**Bob is using an app on his smartphone to figure out the tip.**



### Penny Pincher Says!

#### There's an App for That!

Mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, offer a variety of apps for your convenience. To find apps to help you with comparison shopping and/or calculating tips, search "Comparison Shopping" or "Tipping Calculator" in your device's app store and see what's available. A good app can make it quick and easy to find a bargain or figure out how much to tip.



## Activity #10: Comparison Shopping

Ready to shop? Don't forget to compare! A good way to spend wisely is to get in the habit of comparison shopping. Comparison shopping means comparing the quality, price, and convenience of the products or services you want before buying them. As well as saving you a lot of money, comparison shopping also gives you information about what is available in your area, and allows you to use the shopping method that is most convenient and efficient for you. See the example below and use the blank chart to help you the next time you comparison shop.

### EXAMPLE: Comparison Shopping for Jeans

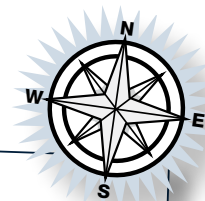
Store:	GAP (at the Mall)	Discount Store (Marshalls)	Internet	Thrift Store
Price:	\$50	\$35	\$30	\$10
Location:	Far away	Close	My home	Very close
Hours:	Convenient	Convenient	Convenient	Only open until 4:30 p.m.
Extra Costs:	\$10 for para transit	None	\$7 for shipping	None
Other:	Fun to visit!	None	Can't try them on	Don't have my size



### Making Your Decision with Comparison Shopping

In the example above, we took the following into consideration:

- The jeans cost \$15 less at Marshalls than they did at the mall.
- Marshalls had the right size jeans, unlike the thrift store.
- Marshalls is easy to get to.
- The online list price for the jeans is \$5 less than Marshalls, but when you add shipping it's actually \$2 more. This price might be worth the convenience of shopping from home, as long as you don't mind not trying on the jeans first.



## Comparison Shopping for \_\_\_\_\_

Store:	Store #1	Store #2	Store #3	Store #4
Price:				
Location:				
Hours:				
Extra Costs:				
Other:				

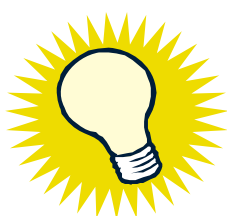


### **Penny Pincher Says!**

Comparison shopping means comparing the quality, price and convenience of what you want to purchase.

# Chapter 3

## My Personal Money Map



### REMEMBER

Money Mapping includes budgeting and much more.

**Matt and Chris set aside money each month so they can buy brunch at the diner.**



### Activity in This Chapter

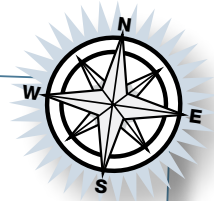
Activity #11 Complete Your Personal Money Map

A money map is your most important tool for controlling your finances. It's your plan for saving *and* spending money. It's a good idea to make a money map for each month of the year.

How do you begin to make a money map? The money map is just a copy of your "Personal Statement of Income and Spending" with a few adjustments that will reflect your plan to use surplus monies or address a deficit.

What is the next step? In the last chapter we figured out what your actual spending looked like for one month. (In our example, we used September.) Now you are going to turn your "Amount" column into your "Planned Spending" column for the next month. (In our example, it will be October.) This way you will plan your future spending based on amounts from the previous month. Add one more column called "Actual Spending" to record how much you actually spend that month.

Each month when you record your spending, fill in the "Actual Spending" column and then start the next month's "Planned Spending" column with those numbers. You should make adjustments to your plan for the next month to account for extra money or shortfalls. It's very important that you not simply copy actual spending from the month before without addressing what you really want to do with your cash flow. The easiest way to understand how this works is to look at the example on the next page.



## EXAMPLE: My Personal Money Map for October

### Step 1: Needs

Description	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
1. Personal care items from drug store	\$ 7.65	
2. Groceries from supermarket	\$160.00	
3. Doctor visit co-pay	\$ 25.00	
4. Rent	\$400.00	
5. Utilities	\$ 74.00	
6. Telephone	\$ 20.00	
7. Student loan payment	\$ 50.00	
<b>Step 2: Total Needs</b>	<b>\$736.65</b>	

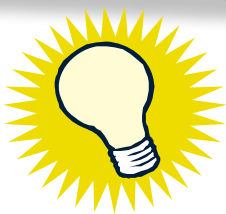
### Step 3: Wants

Description	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
8. Birthday gift for Mom		
9. Halloween party supplies	\$ 45.00	
10. Meals eaten out	\$ 9.20	
11. Concert tickets	\$ 50.00	
12. DVDs	\$ 26.50	
<b>Step 4: Total Wants</b>	<b>\$130.70</b>	

**Step 5: Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)** **\$867.35**

**Step 6: Total Monthly Income** **\$950.00**

**Step 7: Cash Flow (Income – Expenses)** **\$ 82.65**  
 $\$950.00 - \$867.35 = \$ 82.65$



### REMEMBER

If your spending is more than your income, you need to figure out how you can cut some spending before you complete your money map.

Notice under “Step 3: Wants,” there is no planned spending for Mom’s birthday gift because her birthday happened in September. There is, however, planned spending for Halloween party supplies because that will happen in October.

### Complete the Actual Spending Column

At the end of the month, record your actual spending for each of the items in your money map. Our next example now shows a completed money map.





### EXAMPLE: My Personal Money Map for October

#### Step 1: Needs

Description	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
1. Personal care items from drug store	\$ 7.65	\$ 0
2. Groceries from supermarket	\$160.00	\$150.00
3. Doctor visit co-pay	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00
4. Rent	\$400.00	\$400.00
5. Utilities	\$ 74.00	\$ 74.00
6. Telephone	\$ 20.00	\$ 30.00
7. Student loan payment	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00
8. Car repair	\$ 0	\$100.00
	<b>\$736.65</b>	<b>\$829.00</b>

#### Step 2: Total Needs

#### Step 3: Wants

Description	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
9. Halloween party supplies	\$ 45.00	\$ 0
10. Meals eaten out	\$ 9.20	\$ 20.00
11. Concert tickets	\$ 50.00	\$ 30.50
12. DVDs	\$ 26.50	\$ 0
	<b>\$130.70</b>	<b>\$ 50.50</b>

#### Step 4: Total Wants

<b>Step 5: Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)</b>	<b>\$867.35</b>	<b>\$879.50</b>
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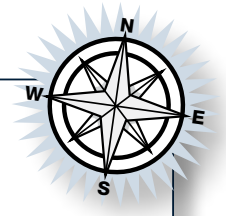
<b>Step 6: Total Monthly Income</b>	<b>\$950.00</b>	<b>\$950.00</b>
-------------------------------------	-----------------	-----------------

<b>Step 7: Cash Flow (Income – Expenses)</b>	<b>\$ 82.65</b>	<b>\$ 70.50</b>
$\$950.00 - \$879.50 = \$70.50$		

Notice that spending for some items in this example changed from what was planned to what was actually spent. There was nothing spent on DVDs or on the Halloween party supplies. The actual phone was higher than you planned. There was an unplanned car repair. Income stayed the same. Fortunately, total spending for needs and wants was still less than income.

### ➡ Activity #11: Complete Your Personal Money Map

Now you're ready to go! On the next page is a blank worksheet that you can copy and use for your "Personal Money Map."



## My Personal Money Map

Month: \_\_\_\_\_

My Needs Descriptions	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
1. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
7. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
8. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Needs	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Wants Descriptions	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
1. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Wants	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Monthly Income	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Cash Flow (Income – Expenses)	\$ _____	\$ _____

## To Review: Understanding Your Money Map

### *Spending Less Than Your Income*

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#### **Surplus**

Money left over.

---

Spending less than your income is good! This is called a **surplus**. It means you have money left over. You're in good shape.

When you plan a money map at the beginning of the month, plan to spend less than your expected income. At the end of the month, compare your Total Spending for needs and wants to your actual Total Monthly Income.

The difference of \$70.50 in our example is money that you can put toward savings.

### *Spending More Than Your Income*

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#### **Deficit**

When there isn't enough money to cover all expenses.

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Spending more than your income is not so good! This is called a **deficit**. It means you have overspent and it is time to look at where you are spending too much.

What should you do if your actual spending is greater than your income? You may have to make up the difference by using your savings or by borrowing.

You will get yourself into financial trouble if you keep spending more than your income. Your monthly money map will help you clearly see this so that you can avoid over-spending.

If you find yourself spending more than you had for the month, don't panic. Take a look at where you over-spent. Can you cut spending for entertainment? Could you stop eating out? In your money map, commit to spend less on your wants and try to stick to the plan. This is how you control your finances.



Lauren is reviewing her bank statement so that she knows how much she spent last month.

# My Lifelong Saving Commitment

# Chapter 4

## Activities in This Chapter

III ➡ Activity #12 What Am I Saving For?

III ➡ Activity #13 What Will I Do To Save?

In the past, you may have planned to save money at the end of the month. But, in reality, you probably didn't have much left over. You probably spent it on all of your need expenses and on some of your want expenses.

You can change that. Rather than saving money *only* if you have any left over, you can put some aside—no matter how small the amount—into savings right at the beginning of the month. This is called *paying yourself first*.

Save \$5, \$10, or \$20 a month, whatever amount you decide. Ideally, aim to save 10% of your income. For example, if your income every month is \$800, 10% would be \$80. The most important thing is to start saving now and make it a lifetime habit.

**Bob is helped by his sign language interpreter to deposit cash at the bank.**



## Activity #12: What Am I Saving For?

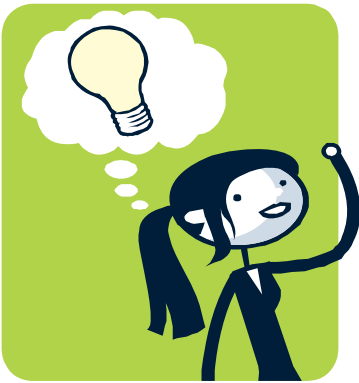
You save money for the future. It's a great idea to create some savings goals for yourself. Some examples of things you might save for are:

- Expensive purchases like a home or an adapted van,
- Special occasions like a birthday or a vacation,
- An unexpected emergency like a broken refrigerator or a computer repair, or
- Entertainment like a movie or concert tickets.

### My Savings Goals

List some things you plan to save for:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



### Penny Pincher Says!

Look at my bright ideas:

- Drop your spare change into the Coinstar Center machine at your local grocery store in exchange for a gift card. You may be charged a small fee if you decide you want a cash voucher instead of a gift card.
- Buy yourself a digital coin bank so you can track how much you're saving when you drop in your spare change!

### Tips for Successful Saving

If you think that paying yourself first is easier said than done, here are some ideas to get started:

- Begin by looking at your want expenses. Are there some wants you could do without?
- Include "savings" as part of your spending plan. Make "saving" an expense in your money map. Make it come before spending for things you want but may not need.
- Try putting \$1 a day, plus your pocket change, into a large envelope or jar. *Keep it in a safe place.* At the end of the month, deposit that money into your savings account. This can REALLY add up! (Save one dollar each day, just seven dollars each week, and you can save \$365 in a year!)
- When you shop for items like food and clothes, look for things that are on sale.
- Try shopping at thrift stores or garage sales. You can pick up some great bargains this way.
- Shop at dollar stores to get a lower price.
- Break expensive habits, such as excessive clothes-buying, drinking, or smoking, and save the difference.
- Try a savings app on your smart phone like Acorns or Digit to save automatically.



- When you purchase a product, send in any **rebate** forms. Most people forget to take advantage of this savings tool.
- If possible, have your employer automatically deduct money from your paycheck and deposit it into your savings account. What you don't see, you won't miss. Even if the amount is small, you'll be amazed how fast your savings grow.
- Another option is to have your bank or credit union automatically deduct a set amount from your checking account each month and deposit it in your savings account.
- Put any tax refund, raise or bonus you receive into savings rather than spending it.

### Rebate

A rebate can be an additional discount when you purchase a product or it can be a partial refund if you have paid too much money for taxes, rent, or a utility, such as electricity, gas, or water.

## Activity #13: What Will I Do To Save?

Make a list of what you will do to save for your goals.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Saving Limits for People Receiving Government Benefits

If you receive financial assistance from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or services from one of Pennsylvania's Home and Community-Based Services waiver programs, make sure that your total resources (that includes the total of your checking and savings accounts) are within the program guidelines. For example, if you receive SSI, the total for your **countable resources** cannot be more than \$2,000. Exceptions are made for your own home and your own car for essential transportation—the value of these items is not counted against the \$2,000 resource limit.

The waiver guidelines are a little more flexible, but there are still strict limits on how much you can earn each month as well as the total amount of countable resources you may have and still maintain your services.

For information about Pennsylvania's waiver programs, visit the Department of Human Services' website, <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/servicesfordisabled/index.htm>. You can also call toll-free, 1-800-692-7462.

### Countable Resources

Certain assets are not counted when Social Security determines eligibility for SSI or the state determines eligibility for Medical Assistance (Medicaid). For a complete list of assets that are not counted, go to: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/text-resources-ussi.htm>.

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### **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**

An earned benefit for people with significant disabilities who are no longer able to work. SSDI is funded through payroll taxes, so the amount you receive is based on how long you've worked and how much you have paid into the system.

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### **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

A federal (unearned) income benefit for adults and children with disabilities, and adults 65+, who have limited income and resources. SSI is funded by general tax dollars and provides a cash benefit that pays for basic living needs.

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## **A Question Everyone Has ...**

What's the difference between **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)** and **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**?

That's an important question! The initials of the programs are so similar that it's easy to confuse the two.

- SSDI is an earned benefit (cash) provided for individuals with significant disabilities because their disability or health condition keeps them from engaging in their normal occupation or any other work. Individuals must be between 18 and 65, and must have worked a certain number of years to be eligible. The spouse of the person with the disability, and any dependent children, may also be eligible to receive partial dependent benefits. These are called auxiliary benefits.

SSDI is funded through payroll taxes, so the amount you receive is based on how long you've worked and how much you've paid in Social Security taxes. After receiving SSDI for two years, a person with a disability will also become eligible for Medicare.

- SSI, meanwhile, is an unearned benefit that pays cash on a monthly basis to people with limited income and resources who are 65 or older; to adults who have a disability (based on the same definition used by SSDI) or are blind; and to children who have a disability or are blind. This program is only for people who have very limited income and assets. Individuals who receive SSI are also eligible for Medical Assistance.

For more information about SSI, go to the Social Security Administration website, [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).



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### **Penny Pincher Says!**

It may be possible to receive both SSDI and SSI benefits.

## **There Are Ways to Save Money and Not Lose Benefits**

There is good news. It may be possible for you to save money and be able to keep your SSI payments and waiver services. The four most common ways to save money are with an ABLE account, a Special Needs Trust, an Individual Development Account, and a PASS account.

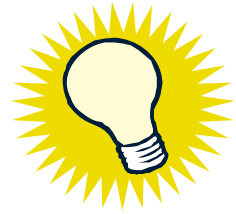
### ***Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts***

People who have acquired a disability prior to the age of 26 and who receive or are eligible to receive SSI or SSDI may be eligible to set up an ABLE account. The monies in these accounts do not count as an asset, and therefore will not affect asset limits imposed by SSI and Home and Community-Based Services waiver programs. These funds are not taxed, and can be used for assistive technology, transportation, medical expenses, utilities, housing expenses, as well as saving for long-term goals. You can access your ABLE account with a debit card, checks, and automatic payment transfers, just like a bank account. It's easy to sign up at [www.paable.gov](http://www.paable.gov), or call 855-529-ABLE (2253).

## Special Needs Trusts

A Special Needs Trust is a specially-designed account that can be very helpful if you receive government benefits (like SSI, Medical Assistance or food stamps) which limit how much you are allowed to save in your bank or credit union accounts. If the Trust is created in the right way, the money in the Trust won't be counted against the limits the government has set up for how much money you can save. Trusts are complicated, and there are important things to know:

- A family member or friend may establish a Trust on your behalf.
- Family members or friends can deposit money into the Trust.
- A Trust can be used to pay for big expenses, like a trip to visit family, a new computer or a TV.
- A Trust cannot be used to pay for regular, recurring expenses, like food, rent or utility bills.
- A Trust can be a good way to plan for your future.
- To find out more about Trusts, speak with a lawyer who has experience with Trusts.



### REMEMBER

The money you set aside in a ABLE account will not affect your eligibility for SSI or the amount of your SSI check. For more information, check out Social Security online:

[www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm)

## A Tale of Two Sisters

Joy and Jill are professional musicians who care about being involved and making a difference in their community. Music, particularly Swing Era music, has always been important to them. A few years ago, they started a non-profit to promote disability awareness, offer art therapy, and preserve history through their music.

Diagnosed with limb-girdle muscular dystrophy at the age of 7, both women use a variety of

assistive technology, including an adapted

van to get around. It's important to be at appointments on time, and Joy and Jill need reliable transportation to run errands, go to gigs, attend church, and take care of their aging mother. Joy and Jill used a few different funding resources to pay for their new van. The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation paid for the accessible modifications, and the sisters used a combination of monies from their ABLE accounts as well as their Special Needs Trusts to cover the cost of the van itself.

Now Joy and Jill are using their ABLE accounts to save for retirement. They love that they can save their own money and not be penalized for it.

**Now Joy and Jill are using their ABLE accounts to save for retirement. They love that they can safely save their money without losing access to important benefits.**



## Comparison of ABLE Accounts and Special Needs Trusts (in Pennsylvania)

	ABLE Accounts	Special Needs Trusts			
		First Party		Third Party	
		Pooled	Individual	Pooled	Individual
Set Up By	Person with a disability, parent, guardian or someone who has power of attorney. Enrollment available at <a href="http://PAABLE.gov">PAABLE.gov</a>	Person with a disability, parent, guardian or a court	Person with a disability, parent, guardian or a court	Anyone except the individual with the disability	
Funded By	Anyone (including self). Contributions by other people should be made directly to account.	Individual with the disability (e.g., inheritance, law suit)		Anyone except the individual with the disability	
Who is Eligible?	Anyone who has a qualifying disability with an onset prior to age 26. A qualifying disability is one that entitles you to Social Security disability benefits (SSI or SSDI). If not eligible for SSI or SSDI, a person may also self-certify.	Beneficiary meets Social Security Administration’s definition of “disabled” generally. There are no age restrictions for a First Party, Pooled Trust or a Third Party Pooled or Individual Trust. The First Party, Individual Trust must be set up for an individual with a disability prior to the age of 65.			
Who Makes Spending Decisions?	The beneficiary (individual with disability), guardian and/or “authorized representative”.	Trustee (not the beneficiary)			
Number of Accounts	One (1) per individual.	An individual may have more than one type of Special Needs Trust.			
Costs	No set-up fee. The annual fee is \$60 (\$15 per quarter); however, if electronic delivery is selected, the annual fee is reduced to \$45. Additionally, there are investment fees ranging from 0.34% to 0.38%, depending on the options selected. For the checking account option (provided through Fifth Third Bank), there is a monthly service fee of \$2.00, which is waived if there is e-delivery of account statements or the average monthly balance is at least \$250.	The costs vary depending on who sets up and administers the Trust(s). Some companies do not charge a fee to set up a Pooled Trust and the annual administration fee can be as low as \$500 a year (for amounts under \$5,000.) The set-up costs for First Party (Individual) and Third Party can be as low as \$2,000 for attorney fees plus a minimum of 1% on assets (\$500 minimum) for annual Trustee fees. Family members or close family friends may be willing to serve as a Trustee without charging any fees. A professional will charge an annual fee based on the account balance. (The percentage of the fee is usually higher on a smaller Trust.)			
Is the Interest on the Account Taxed?	Not when in the account. Distributions for qualified expenses are tax free.	Yes			
Deposit Restrictions	IRS Yearly Gift Limit (\$15,000 in 2019). Additional contributions may be allowed for employed account owners in certain circumstances.	None			



	ABLE Accounts	Special Needs Trusts			
		First Party		Third Party	
		Pooled	Individual	Pooled	Individual
Balance Restrictions	It's possible to save up to \$100,000 without adversely affecting eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Above that, SSI will be suspended but not terminated. Medical Assistance ("Medicaid") will continue.	None			
What Can the Funds Be Used For?	Funds can be used on qualified expenses, including assistive technology, housing, basic living expenses, education, transportation and more. There are penalties if used on unqualified expenses. Funds used for housing or non-qualified expenses may impact taxes and benefits if not used within the same month. (See <a href="http://PAABLE.gov">PAABLE.gov</a> )	Funds may be used for any expenses the Trustee deems appropriate. However, if Trust funds are spent on food and housing (shelter), this may jeopardize the beneficiary's ability to collect Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other government benefits and may result in the payment of penalties.			
What Happens After Death?	Funds from the ABLE account may be used to pay for outstanding qualified expenses, including funeral and burial expenses. Any remaining funds are distributed according to the individual's estate plan or according to Pennsylvania's intestacy law. An individual or family can also choose to roll-over the remaining money to an eligible sibling's ABLE account. Estate Recovery rules may apply if the beneficiary dies after turning age 55 and if remaining ABLE account funds are transferred to the estate.	Medicaid payback may be avoided by permitting the trust (non-profit) to keep the assets upon the death of the beneficiary in order to help other individuals with disabilities.	The trust agreement must grant Medicaid the first right of recovery against the trust assets upon the beneficiary's death.	The grantor can determine how the remaining trust assets are to be disbursed at the death of the beneficiary.	
Pennsylvania-Only Benefits	Contributions to a PA ABLE account are PA state income tax deductible up to \$15,000 per person. Monies remaining in an ABLE account after the beneficiary dies are not subject to PA inheritance tax. The account is protected in state legal proceedings from the beneficiary's creditors and the creditors of others who contributed to the account.	None			

Note: The purpose of establishing an ABLE account and/or Special Needs Trust is to allow individuals with disabilities and their families to save money. The monies in these accounts do not count as an asset. An individual with a disability (i.e., the beneficiary) may have the ability to control the funds that are in an ABLE account; whereas, the beneficiary cannot control the funds that are available in a Special Needs Trust.



## **Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)**

Individual Development Account (IDA) programs help people with a lower income save money for things like education, starting a business, or buying assistive technology. For every dollar a person puts into an IDA, the program will add a dollar (often more). Before you can receive this matching amount, you have to agree to the rules of the program, such as making regular contributions to the account or taking free classes on how to manage money. For more information about IDAs, or to find a program near you, you can contact Prosperity Now at <https://prosperitynow.org/issues/individual-development-accounts>, or you can contact your local United Way chapter at <http://www.unitedway.org/find-your-united-way>.

### **Penny Pincher Says!**

#### **Do You Work or Attend College?**

You may be able to keep your SSI and Medical Assistance benefits while working or attending college. For more information go to the Social Security website: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/medicaid.htm> and <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/spotlights/spot-student-earned-income.htm>.

## **Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)**

For people with disabilities who plan to work, or are working, it's possible to set up a savings account, called a Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), through the Social Security Administration, which will allow you to set aside monies for a specific item or service that is needed for a work goal. These monies will not be counted against your resource limit for SSI. A PASS account can make it possible for you to save the money you need for things like a down payment for a car that will help you get to a job, or for a computer that will allow you to start your own business.

## **OVR + PASS + PATF = A Modified Van for Sharrod!**

When Sharrod was 9 years old, he contracted bacterial meningitis, and had to have partial amputations of both arms and legs. He gradually learned how to use his prosthetic limbs and his power wheelchair, which made it possible for him to attend his neighborhood school.

Sharrod worked hard to reach his goals to have a job and a family. He worked at various jobs while attending college, and is now employed full-time at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). To get to work, Sharrod needed to purchase a vehicle with a ramp and specialized hand controls. Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) helped put together a funding package.

Pennsylvania's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) paid for the vehicle modifications, Sharrod saved money in his PASS account for the down payment on the van, and a PATF low-interest loan paid for the balance of the van.

**Sharrod and his family enjoy their accessible van.**





## Work Incentives: It Always Pays to Work!

**Work Incentives** are programs that the Social Security Administration (SSA) offers to people with disabilities who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) to help make it possible for people to explore work while still receiving health care and cash benefits. The Work Incentives are slightly different depending on whether you receive SSI or SSDI; however, all the Incentives are designed to encourage you to enter, re-enter or continue in the workforce.

### ***A few examples of SSDI Work Incentives include:***

- The trial work period. This allows you to test your ability to work for at least nine months without losing your Social Security benefits, regardless of how much you earn.
- Extended period of eligibility benefits. After the trial period, you have 36 months during which you can work and still receive benefits for any month in which your earnings aren't "substantial," as defined by the SSA.
- Expedited reinstatement. If you continue working after the trial work period and the extended period of eligibility for benefits, your SSDI will stop. However, if within five years you are unable to continue working because of your disability, you can resume your SSDI benefits without having to file a new application.

### ***A few examples of SSI Work Incentives include:***

- Continuation of SSI. If you begin working, SSA will continue to pay you your SSI benefits unless your earnings exceed the SSI income limits.
- Expedited reinstatement. After SSI is stopped, if within five years, you are unable to work again because of your disability or medical condition, SSA will not require a new disability application.
- Deduction of work expenses related to the disability. Money spent on items and services necessary for work because of your disability (e.g., an adapted vehicle, hearing aids) will be deducted from your earnings before SSA assesses your eligibility for benefits.

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### **Work Incentives**

Work Incentives are programs that the Social Security Administration (SSA) offers to people with disabilities who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) to help make it possible for them to explore work while still receiving health care and cash benefits.

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### **Penny Pincher Says!**

When you're working and receiving SSI, within the first nine days of each month you must report your wages from the previous month. Avoid the possibility of a mistake or loss of paperwork in the mail by using the SSI Mobile Wage Reporting app, or call toll-free 800-772-1213.



You can learn more about Work Incentives by reading Social Security's *Red Book*. To find the 2018 version of the *Red Book* (also in Spanish), go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/redbook).

**Michael is an advocate for the #IWantToWork campaign. This campaign will provide paid employment opportunities for people with disabilities during their high school years.**



## ***Do You Need Help Understanding the Work Incentives Programs?***

There are three agencies in Pennsylvania that can provide free counseling to people who qualify for SSDI and/or SSI and who are interested in learning how working may affect their government benefits. These agencies are funded, in part, by a federal program called Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA).

Working with a WIPA agency can help you:

- Understand the rules of specific Work Incentives;
- Analyze how work and earnings may affect your Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), health care, and other public benefits; and
- Understand the services provided by PA's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

WIPAs do not make any decisions about a person's benefits. Those decisions are made by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and other agencies (including the Department of Human Services and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation).

Each of the three Pennsylvania WIPA agencies is responsible for specific areas of the state. To find out which agency covers your county, contact one of the agencies listed below.

- Western PA and the Southern Allegheny Region:  
AHEDD (866) 902-4333  
[www.ahedd.org](http://www.ahedd.org)
- Southeastern PA:  
Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP) (215) 238-8070, ext. 309  
<http://disabilityrightspa.org>
- Central and Northeastern PA:  
Goodwill Keystone (888) 960-9675  
[www.yourgoodwill.org/grow/work-incentives-planning-and-assistance-wipa](http://www.yourgoodwill.org/grow/work-incentives-planning-and-assistance-wipa)

## **Preparing for Retirement**

If retirement savings will not put your government benefits in jeopardy, retirement planning is something you should begin as soon as possible. There are a whole set of rules and a lot of thinking that needs to go into planning for retirement. These are some useful websites to help you begin the planning process:

<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/retirement/consumerinfopension>.

**Kimiko loves animals and enjoys her job at the local pet store.**



# Where Should I Keep My Money?

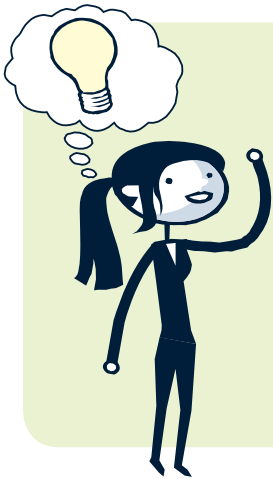
# Chapter 5

## Activity in This Chapter

Activity #14 *Protect Yourself from Identity Theft*

## Information About Credit Unions and Banks

A credit union or a bank, if insured, is a safe place to keep your money. Both offer services that can make it easy for you to protect your money, track your expenses, and set up a savings plan. The description on the next two pages can help you decide what the best option is for you.

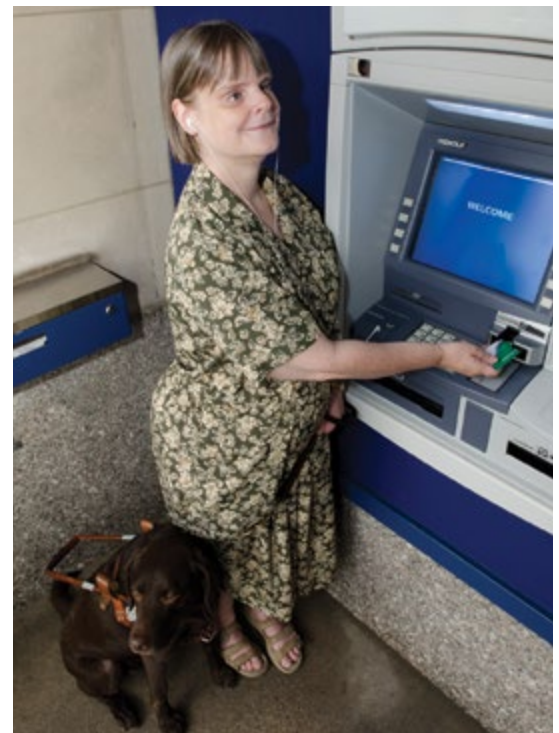


### Penny Pincher Says!

In today's world, you can easily manage your money without physically going to your bank or credit union. But for those who like to, getting to know the tellers and staff can be a good thing. Building a relationship with someone at your bank can help you to have a sense that people know who you are and care about your well-being.

## What is a Credit Union?

Credit unions are financial membership organizations. You must become a member of a credit union in order to use its services. Often this means that you have to pay a small, one-time-only fee. Most credit unions offer financial education opportunities, credit and debit cards, online banking, and



**Suzanne is able to access an ATM using the headphone jack to hear instructions and the braille keypad to type in her Personal Identification Number (PIN).**

other services. Because credit unions are non-profit organizations, they often charge lower fees than banks and pay higher interest rates on savings accounts, money market accounts, and interest checking accounts. However, credit unions, because they often cover a smaller geographic area than banks, generally have fewer branches and ATMs (Automated Teller Machines).

## What is a Bank?

Banks are for-profit institutions that usually provide more services than a credit union because they are responding to the demand for “one-stop shopping.” This means that most banks will offer services to individuals as well as businesses. These services and products include debit cards, credit cards, checking and savings accounts, money market accounts, mortgages, home equity loans, online banking, and extended service hours. Banks typically have multiple branches across a large region. Use the chart below to help you decide if a credit union or a bank is right for you.



### Penny Pincher Says!

Comparison shop your banks and credit unions! If you don't have an account with a bank or credit union, start one now. Compare the banks and credit unions near where you live. Shop around. Talk with family and friends about where they do their banking or check out these two helpful websites: [www.creditunionsonline.com](http://www.creditunionsonline.com) and [www.findabetterbank.com](http://www.findabetterbank.com). See who offers the services you are looking for and who has the best rates.

	Cash checks for free	Accounts available	Open to everyone	ATM machines available	Online services	Lower fees	Accounts insured
Credit Union	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Bank	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

The most important factors to remember in choosing where to keep your money are: location, hours, online presence, and whether or not there are fees associated with using the bank or credit union. Identify what matters most to you, and start an account today!

## Interest

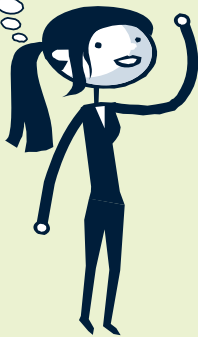
Interest is a fee paid to use someone else's money. A bank or credit union pays interest to you when you put money into a savings account. You pay interest when you borrow money from a bank or credit union.

The following are services that credit unions and banks can offer you.

- **Checking Accounts**

A checking account is a service that gives customers a way to pay bills by check or online, and a way to deposit money. Checking accounts often don't pay **interest**, or if they do, the interest they pay is less than what you can earn in a savings account. A minimum balance is sometimes required. Some banks or credit unions charge a monthly fee for checking accounts. Often banks and credit unions offer debit cards that are linked to your checking account.



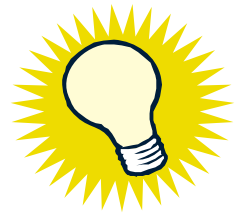


### **Penny Pincher Says!**

What will you need to open a checking or savings account?

- A Social Security card or your Social Security number;
- Photo identification, like a driver's license or non-driver's identification card;
- Proof of your current address, such as a utility bill; and
- The minimum amount of money needed to open the account.

Because banks and credit unions differ, call and ask what the minimum deposit is and what else you should bring if you want to open an account.



### **REMEMBER**

When deciding where to open a checking or savings account, look for a bank that is FDIC-insured or a credit union that is insured by NCUSIF so that your money will be protected! Check the glossary on page 84 to learn the full names of these two insurance programs.

- **Savings Accounts**

A savings account is a secure place to keep your money for future use. Some people use them to save up for a vacation or for an expensive purchase. Savings accounts normally pay you a small amount of interest.

- **Debit Cards**

A debit card is a plastic card that is connected to your credit union or bank account. When you make purchases using this card, money is immediately taken from your account to cover the cost of the purchases. Debit cards can also be used for the withdrawal of cash. Service fees may be charged, however, if you make the withdrawal from a credit union or a bank that is not your own.



### **Penny Pincher Says!**

Some banks and credit unions charge fees (such as annual fees, minimum balance fees, and overdraft protection fees). The problem with this (other than the added expense) is if you close an account without having paid off all the fees, you can be blocked from opening another account until that fee is paid. But don't worry! There are lots of banks and credit unions that do not charge fees. A little searching on Google will reveal plenty of fee-less options.



**Nate is using a debit card to buy a snack.**

## Important Information about Social Security Benefits

The Social Security Administration requires people who receive SSI, SSDI, and other federal benefits to get their monthly benefit payments electronically. If you have a bank account or a credit union account, you can set up a direct deposit by contacting your financial institution. But, you don't necessarily need a bank or credit union account to receive your payments electronically. You can choose to get your benefit payments through a Direct Express® Debit MasterCard® account. This operates similarly to a prepaid debit card. You can use it to make purchases anywhere debit cards are accepted and to withdraw cash from ATMs, up to the amount that has been deposited. Sign up by contacting the U.S. Treasury Electronic Payment Solution Center at (800) 333-1795, or go to <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/GoDirect/>. The Direct Express® card is safe and there are only minimal fees.

- **ATMs (Automated Teller Machines)**

Almost every bank or credit union has Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) that allow you to skip the teller window and conduct your basic banking tasks at the machine. Your bank or credit union will issue a card for use at its ATMs. This card may also serve as a debit card if you give your permission.

- **Online Banking**

Today it's possible to do nearly all of your banking online. In fact, some banks exist only on the internet and do not have brick-and-mortar stores. Other banks offer online services in addition to in-person services. Online services may include opening a bank account, checking your balance, creating a budget, depositing checks, paying bills, and more! Ask your bank or credit union what services are available to you and how to log on using your computer or the app on your mobile device.

Tracy used Venmo to pay  
Linzey back for coffee.



## Who Uses Cash and Checks Anymore, Anyway?

These days, people are carrying less and less cash with them, and some people don't even bother ordering checks from their bank. That's because more and more businesses are accepting debit, credit and prepaid cards, and most bills can be paid online. But what if you need to get money to your roommate for your portion of the rent this month, or you need to pay back your friend who covered the bill for dinner last night? Transferring money to friends and family (and sometimes even paying bills, making purchases, or paying for services) is easier than ever with apps like PayPal, Venmo, Square Cash, Apple Pay, and Google Pay. These apps can connect directly to your bank account to make it easy (and usually free!) to transfer money with the tap of a button on your smart phone.



Prepaid Cards

Reloadable prepaid cards work like debit cards. You choose the dollar amount to put on the card, and as you spend, your purchases are deducted from the total balance. When the balance gets low, you can reload with more money. Prepaid cards can be used almost anywhere, whether it's to buy groceries at the supermarket, buy coffee at Starbucks, or even make online purchases.

These cards, like everything else, have upsides and downsides.



<i>The Upsides</i>	<i>The Downsides</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepaid cards are useful for people who don't have a bank account.</li><li>• There is no approval process.</li><li>• You can't get into debt using a prepaid card.</li><li>• A prepaid card could help you budget your expenses.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You don't build a credit history using a prepaid card.</li><li>• Some prepaid cards have activation and reloading fees.</li><li>• If the card is not a well-known brand, it may not be accepted everywhere.</li><li>• A store card can only be used at that particular store. For example, a Target card can only be used at a Target store.</li></ul>

Check-Cashing Stores

Some people don't have a credit union or bank account and cash their paychecks at a check-cashing store. There are two really good reasons for *NOT* using these stores:

1. It costs you money to cash a check at one of these places. They charge you a big fee, typically 3–7% of the check amount. This means you have less money left to spend on things you need and want.
2. It's not a good idea to have a lot of cash in your pocket or lying around your house. Your money is less likely to get lost or stolen if it's in a credit union or bank.

The safest option is to open an account with a bank or credit union and deposit your checks into that account, or use that financial institution to cash the check for free. However, if you don't have an account and you need to cash a check, it is worth looking into alternatives to check-cashing stores. The bank that issued the check may be your best bet (be sure to ask what their fees are to cash the check), and national retailers and grocery stores like Walmart and Safeway may provide cash checking services for a small fee, or even for free. Prepaid cards sometimes offer the ability to deposit a check to load the card, and if you're not in a rush you can withdraw the funds at an ATM once the check has cleared.

## Identity Theft

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes. It happens when someone steals your personal information and then uses it to buy things that you have to pay for.

### *What Can Happen if a Thief Steals Your Identity?*

The thief can:

- Take out a loan in your name;
- Open credit cards in your name;
- Rent an apartment and open utility accounts in your name;
- Use your ATM card and take all of the money out of your account;
- Get a driver's license or other ID card, using YOUR name, and THEIR photo; and
- Try to use your Social Security number to get government benefits for themselves.

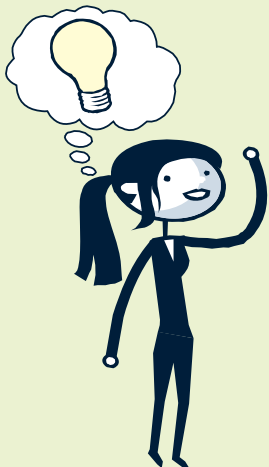


**Michael is shredding an old credit card bill. Contact your municipality to ask about local shredding events.**

You need to protect your personal information to avoid being responsible for purchases you did not make. You can check for identity theft at least three times a year by getting a copy of your credit report from each of the three credit bureaus. (We'll talk about credit bureaus in the next chapter.)

### *How Can You Protect Your Identity?*

- Never throw personal information in the trash, especially a public trash can. Always shred personal documents like credit card bills, ATM receipts, and bank statements. Be sure you shred items small enough that they cannot be put back together.
- Use only secure websites (https) when you make Internet purchases. PayPal is a safe way to make online purchases and payments.
- Be aware of who is around and may be watching when you use an ATM machine.
- Be very cautious when giving out your Social Security number or financial information online or to someone over the phone.



#### **Penny Pincher Says!**

- **PayPal** is a secure Internet-based financial service. You can sign-up for a free PayPal account and then link it to your bank account, debit or credit card so that you can buy things online or in a store. Your financial information is never shared with the seller. PayPal does not charge a fee when you buy something, but there may be a small fee for some of the other services. For more information, visit <https://www.paypal.com/us/home>.
- **Phishing** is a kind of identity theft where criminals try to get your personal information by pretending to be an honest business. Falling for a phishing scam can really hurt you. To protect yourself against these scams, remember: Businesses should never ask you for personal information by email and you should never give it to them. Also, be careful when you click on links in an email. And always use a spam filter and antivirus software on your computer.

- When you create a **User Identification (ID)** and **Personal Identification Number (PIN)** code for an account, make it something that will be difficult to guess (don't use your birthday).
- Make sure that you keep a copy of all of your account numbers in a safe place.
- If you ask someone to get cash for you with your debit or credit card, always ask for a receipt to be sure that the amount you received is exactly the amount that was withdrawn. Make sure to monitor your account by reviewing your bank statements online or when they come in the mail.

### ***What Can You Do If Your Identity Is Stolen?***

- File a police report. This will provide legal rights for you with credit bureaus and companies where your identity theft took place.
- Contact your credit union or bank where you do business to tell them your identity has been stolen.
- If you have a credit card, contact the credit card company immediately.
- When you receive your monthly credit card statement, check for purchases that you did not make. If there are purchases that you did not make, contact the credit card company, in writing, to let them know. Request twice-monthly copies of your credit report until your case is resolved. This is a free service for people who have had their identity stolen.
- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by calling 1-877-438-4338 or online at <http://www.consumer.gov/section/scams-and-identity-theft>.

Cleaning up once your identity has been stolen is a very time-consuming job, so it is important to take time to do the necessary steps to be sure no one is ever able to make you a victim of identity theft.

### **➡ Activity #14: Protect Yourself from Identity Theft**

Make a list of things you can do right now to protect yourself from identity theft:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **User Identification (ID)**

This is a made-up name you use to identify yourself when you are signing into an account. Normally, you shouldn't share your username with anyone. If you must share it because you need assistance, be sure you trust the person.

#### **Personal Identification Number (PIN)**

A PIN is a secret code you use to gain access to the money in your accounts. Normally, you shouldn't share your PIN with other people. If you must do so because you need assistance, always ask for a receipt and then check your monthly bank statement.



#### **Penny Pincher Says!**

Remember to keep track of all of your account numbers and Internet passwords. A great way to do this is to buy a small notebook, and write down all of your important information. Make sure you keep the notebook in a safe place.

# Chapter 6

## Borrowing Money

### Activity in This Chapter

➡ Activity #15 Get and Understand Your Credit Report

#### Assistive Technology (AT)

A device that helps a person who has a disability do the things he or she wants to do. Examples of AT include an adapted vehicle, a ramp into a home, an iPad, hearing aids, and a wheelchair or scooter.

People often borrow money for major purchases. Why? Because most people don't have enough of their own money right now to buy expensive things they really need, like a vehicle, a home or **assistive technology**. That doesn't mean, however, that you can't buy these things. Instead you can borrow what you need to purchase the item now, and then pay the money you borrowed back over time.

Craig needs a van to drive to work.



#### Penny Pincher Says!

For more on AT go to Chapter 8 on page 67.





## What You Need to Know About Borrowing

- What is credit?
- Why is it important to have good credit?
- How do you establish credit?
- What are credit reports and credit scores?



### What is Credit?

**Credit** is money that you can borrow with the promise to repay it at a later date.

Credit is not free. It allows you to borrow money when you don't have cash, but you may be charged interest and fees. There are two main types of credit: Installment Credit and Revolving Credit.

#### Credit

Credit is money that you can borrow with the promise to repay it at a later date.

<b><i>Installment Credit</i></b>	<b><i>Revolving Credit</i></b>
This is credit that you use to borrow money and promise to repay in equal amounts over a specific period of time.	This is credit that allows you to borrow a pre-established amount over and over again, as long as your account is in good standing. Each month, you repay the amount borrowed in-full or you make a partial payment.
<b>Example of installment credit:</b> Hilary signs an auto loan in which the agreement requires that she pays the lender \$350 each month for six years.	<b>Example of revolving credit:</b> Max signs up for a credit card. He is given a card that will allow him to borrow up to \$500. He uses the card to make purchases that total \$125. Now he only has \$375 credit left. At the end of the month, Max receives his statement.  He can choose to pay off what he owes in-full (\$125) so that he'll have \$500 that he can use next month. Or,  Max can choose to pay the monthly minimum amount (\$25), but he will have only \$400 credit available the next month. Because he only pays the minimum, Max will owe interest.



#### Penny Pincher Says!

Here are my useful tips for unexpected expenses:

- Build up an emergency cash fund in your savings account.
- Build good credit so you can borrow from your credit union or bank.
- Keep a credit card for emergency expenses.

### Understanding Loans

Loans are complex and their terms may seem confusing, but they can provide needed money at a time when you don't have it. Learn more about how loans work, when to consider one, questions to ask, and how to evaluate loan terms in this three-part blog series written by Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation: <https://patf.us/understanding-loans-part-1/>.

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## Debt

Debt is money that you borrow and must repay. For example, if you borrow \$25 from a friend, you will need to pay her back \$25. \$25 is a debt that you owe your friend.

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## Why Is It So Important to Have Credit?

Good credit is necessary if you plan to make a major purchase and have to borrow the money. You need to establish good credit. Good credit means that you pay your bills on time and you don't have too much **debt**. The importance of good credit also goes beyond purchases. It also means that you will be able to do things like rent an apartment in your own name, have a cell phone, or pay lower insurance rates. It may even help with getting a job because some employers will ask to check your credit score before deciding to hire you.

## How Do You Establish Credit?

There are several ways you can establish credit. You need to show potential lenders that you will be responsible for paying back a loan in the time period that you said you would. How can you do this?

- You can take out a personal loan from a bank and pay it back on time.
- You can get a credit card, charge purchases on your card, and pay your monthly credit card bill by the due date.
- You can even establish credit by paying rent and utility bills on time.

## Beware! Don't Get Trapped by Payday Loans!

*If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.*

Payday loans are small loans made by check cashers or similar businesses at *extremely* high interest rates. Typically, payday loans are short term (two weeks) and for a few hundred dollars. To get a loan, you write a personal check for the amount that you are borrowing, plus a fee. The lender agrees to hold onto the check until you are ready to repay. In return, you get cash immediately.

David took out a payday loan for \$500. He plans on repaying his loan in two weeks. The payday lender says he will charge David \$20 interest for every \$100 that he borrows during this time period. This means that David will owe \$600 when he repays his loan in two weeks. Why?

\$20 interest for every \$100 borrowed. David is borrowing \$500.

$\$20 \times 5 (\$100) = \$100$  interest

$\$500$  borrowed +  $\$100$  interest =  $\$600$

Unfortunately, David didn't have the \$600 he needed in two weeks, so he extended the loan for another two weeks. Suddenly, he owed \$700 because the interest kept piling up! If David kept extending the loan for a year, it would cost him \$2,600 in interest just so he could borrow \$500.

The main reason to avoid payday loans is that they don't help you solve the real problem. If you're having financial difficulties, payday loans can only make the problem worse. You're paying a really high rate of interest which means that your expenses are just going up.



## Credit Cards

A credit card allows you to purchase items now and pay for them later. Credit cards are an example of **revolving credit**.

When you get a credit card, it will have a limit, also known as a “line of credit.” Your first credit card may have a limit of \$350 to \$500. Here are some important things to remember about using a credit card:

- Every month you will get a credit card statement listing any purchases you made that month. Read through the purchases and make sure the information is correct.
- You’ll find a due date included on the credit card statement. The due date is the date when your payment must be received by the credit card company. The credit card company does not require you to pay your entire balance at the end of each month. You can pay the minimum monthly payment.

If you only pay part of your balance, the credit card company will charge you interest on the amount that you didn’t pay. This interest expense can add up, and what you purchased can end up costing you twice as much.

- There may be an annual fee for having a credit card.

### Penny Pincher Says!

A few words of caution concerning your credit card:

- You are responsible for purchases made with your credit card. Read your statement very carefully, especially if you need assistance in using your credit card. If you learn that someone has used your card without your permission, call the phone number on the back of the card to report this activity.
- Many credit cards advertise low interest rates, but they may not make it clear whether the rates will go up after the introductory period. To find the best credit card for you, take a look at some of the credit card comparisons on websites like [nerdwallet.com](http://nerdwallet.com), [bankrate.com](http://bankrate.com), and [creditkarma.com](http://creditkarma.com).
- If you do not pay the minimum payment *on time* each month you will hurt your credit history. If you pay the amount due in full before the due date there will be no additional charges (no interest due) and you will improve your personal credit history.



### Revolving Credit

With revolving credit, a bank allows you to continuously borrow money up to a certain credit limit. Every time you buy something on credit, that amount is subtracted from your total credit limit. When you pay off your balance, you can, again, spend up to your credit limit.

## Additional Fast Facts about Credit Cards

- When used correctly, credit cards can help you build a good **credit history**. This will come in handy when applying for jobs, renting an apartment, or buying a car.
- It is very important to make prompt payments. Credit card companies want to know that you are financially responsible. Whether or not you make your payments on time is one of the biggest things they will take into consideration if you want to borrow more money.

### Credit History

Your credit history is a record of how well you have or have not managed your credit card and loan payments. It’s important to make credit card and loan payments on time so that you can maintain a positive history.



## REMEMBER

For another example of a credit card statement, go to <https://www.mycreditunion.gov/life-events/checking-credit-cards/credit-cards/statement>.



## Penny Pincher Says!

Your goal should be to pay your credit card balance in-full each month. If you are carrying a balance on your card from one month to the next, you are probably spending too much money.

- Try to get a credit card with no annual fee and a low interest rate.
- If you find that you can't pay the entire balance of your credit card bill for several months in a row, then you are spending too much money.

## SAMPLE MONTHLY CREDIT CARD STATEMENT

ABC Bank Credit Card Account Statement  
Account Number XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX  
February 21, 20XX to March 22, 20XX

Summary of Account Activity

Previous Balance\$535.07

Payments-450.00

Other Credits0.00

Purchases+517.12

Balance Transfers+785.00

Cash Advances+318.00

Past Due Amount+\$0.00

Fees Charged+\$69.00

Interest Charged+\$11.36

New Balance\$1,786.00

Credit Limit\$2,000.00

Available Credit\$214.00

Statement closing date3/22/XX

Days in billing cycle30

QUESTIONS?

Call Customer Service1-800-XXX-XXXX

Lost or Stolen Credit Card1-800-XXX-XXXX

Payment Information

New Balance\$1,786.00

Minimum Payment Due\$53.00

Payment Due Date4/20/XX

Late Payment Warning:

If we do not receive your minimum payment by the date listed above, you may have to pay a \$35 late fee and your APRs may be increased up to the Penalty APR of 28.99%.

Minimum Payment Warning:

If you make only the minimum payment each period, you will pay more in interest and take you longer to pay off your balance. For example:

If you make no additional charges using this card and each month you pay...	You will pay off the balance shown on this statement in about...	And you will end up paying an estimated total of
Only the minimum payment	8 years	\$2,785
\$62	3 years	\$2,232 (Savings=\$553)

If you would like information about credit counseling services, call 1-800-XXX-XXX.

### 1 Summary of account activity

A summary of the transactions on your account—your payments, credits, purchases, balance transfers, cash advances, fees, interest charges, and amounts past due. It will also show your new balance, available credit (your credit limit minus the amount you owe), and the last day of the billing period (payments or charges after this day will show up on your next bill).

### 2 Payment information

Your total new balance, the minimum payment amount (the least amount you should pay), and the date your payment is due. A payment generally is considered on time if received by 5 p.m. on the day it is due. If mailed payments are not accepted on a due date (for example, if the due date is on a weekend or holiday), the payment is considered on time if it arrives by 5 p.m. on the next business day. Example: If your bill is due on July 4th and the credit card company does not receive mail that day, your payment will be on time if it arrives by mail by 5 p.m. on July 5th.

### 3 Late payment warning

This section states any additional fees and the higher interest rate that may be charged if your payment is late.

### 4 Minimum payment warning

An estimate of how long it can take to pay off your credit card balance if you make only the minimum payment each month, and an estimate of how much you likely will pay, including interest, in order to pay off your bill in three years (assuming you have no additional charges).

## Student Loans

College can be expensive and a student loan may seem like an attractive way to fund your degree. But, think carefully about where you want to go, what you want to study, and how much money you will need to borrow in order to attend school. The more money you borrow, the bigger a commitment you're making to paying it back—and the more money you'll ultimately pay in interest. Be sure to research all your options for funding your education, including scholarships, financial aid, grants, work-study, and resident assistant programs.

If you decide you want to take out a student loan, and you have determined how much money you're comfortable borrowing (and eventually paying back), you have options about which lending program to use. There are two major sources of student loans: federal and private. Learn more at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans>.

### Loans Must Be Taken Seriously

One missed payment can result in a delinquency, and multiple missed payments can result in a default. This will have a severe negative impact on your credit. Avoid these problems by researching your options for delaying your payments if you find yourself in a position where you can't afford them for a period of time. And be aware, it is very difficult to get discharged from a student loan—in fact, they are one of the only types of loans that will not be discharged even if you file for bankruptcy! One exception: if you are totally and permanently disabled, you may qualify for a total and permanent disability (TPD) discharge of your federal student loans. With a TPD discharge, you will no longer be required to repay your loans. Learn more at <https://disabilitydischarge.com/>.

## Credit Reporting and Credit Bureaus

Credit reporting is a system lenders use to decide whether or not to give you credit, or a loan, and how much interest they will charge you.

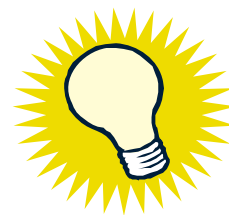
Your credit report is a record of how much you owe and how well you pay it back. A credit report will also include information such as where you live, whether you've ever declared bankruptcy, or whether you've ever been referred to a collection agency. Negative credit history usually goes back only seven years; however, a bankruptcy will remain on your report for ten years from the date of discharge. The good news is that positive credit can remain on your report forever. Having more good information helps strengthen your credit history and increases your credit score.

Credit reports are available from three different credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) that get their information from many different sources. See the end of the chapter for information about how to contact these three credit bureaus.



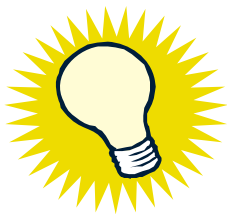
### Penny Pincher Says!

The Federal Pell Grant is a grant available to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree. Learn more and find out if you qualify at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/pell>.



### REMEMBER

See the end of the chapter for information about how to contact the three different credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion).



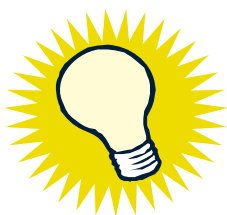
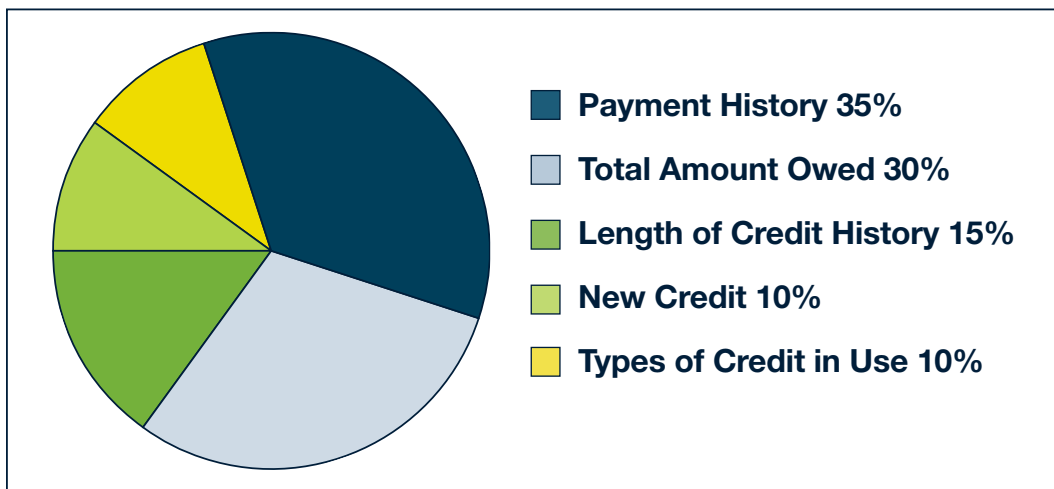
### REMEMBER

It's possible to place a security freeze on your credit report which will stop a credit bureau from releasing any information without your permission to any new loan, employment or credit application. There are fees for placing and lifting a freeze. For more information, go to <https://www.experian.com/freeze/center.html>.

## Credit Scores

Based on the information in your credit report, lenders calculate your FICO (stands for Fair, Isaac and Company) credit score. The score is an indicator of your ability to repay a loan on time. The scores usually range from 300 to 850. A higher score is better; it means the risk of lending you money is less than if you have a low score. It's also possible for someone not to have a credit score. This usually means that someone doesn't have enough of a credit history to receive a score.

Your FICO score is made up of the following:



### REMEMBER

Your FICO score does not come with your credit report. You may have to pay a fee to receive your score.

## Why Is Your FICO Credit Score Important?

- ***Your credit score will determine if you qualify for credit.***

Your credit score will determine if you qualify for credit. Need to buy an adapted vehicle? The lender will check your credit score. In fact, some employers, with written permission, will check credit scores when hiring to help determine who will make a good employee.

- ***Your credit score also determines how much it will cost you to borrow money.***

People with higher credit scores are assumed to be less of a risk and therefore typically receive lower interest rates. Those with lower scores are viewed as more of a risk, so the bank will guard against that risk by lending money at a higher interest rate. And when you're talking about larger loans, such as buying a vehicle or a home, just one extra interest rate point could add up to thousands, or tens of thousands, of dollars in interest.

## Improving Your Credit Score

- ***What happens if you have made some financial mistakes in the past and your credit score is low?***

Don't worry. The good news is that your credit score is constantly updated, so every month, as you begin to make improvements to your credit history, your score will improve. But keep in mind that negative items on your report will stay there for seven years or more, so it will take some time for serious financial mistakes to disappear completely.

- **Remember, if you make payments on time, you'll slowly start to raise your credit score.**

You can also improve your score if you reduce your total debt. As you can see in the pie chart at the left, the second largest part of your score is how much debt you have, so if you can lower your overall debt you'll also begin to make some serious headway with improving your credit score.

You are entitled to one free credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion) every twelve months. It's always a good idea to review your credit report and make sure what is being reported is correct!

For your information: Your FICO score does not come with your credit report. You may have to pay a fee to receive your score.

## Activity #15: Get and Understand Your Credit Report

Request a copy of your credit report by:

- Going online, [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com), and ordering a report; or, by calling 877-322-8228 (toll-free)
- You can also check out some of the new companies for information and a free credit score that you can track over time. Credit Karma, <https://www.creditkarma.com>, works with TransUnion; and, Credit Sesame, <http://www.creditsesame.com>, works with Experian.



### Penny Pincher Says!

- A good strategy for tracking your credit is to request one credit report every four months from a different credit bureau. If you do this, you can check your credit 3 times per year.
- People who are blind or have low vision may request their free annual credit reports in Braille, large print or audio format.

## What Should You Do If You Find a Mistake on Your Credit Report?

If you find a mistake on your credit report, contact the credit-reporting bureau that is reporting it and give them details and copies of all supporting documents. They will tell you what documents are needed. Follow-up with the credit agency if you do not receive a satisfactory response within thirty days from the date your letter was mailed. It is also a good idea to contact the other credit reporting bureaus, too.

The three major national credit bureaus are:

- Equifax, 1-800-685-1111 or [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)
- Experian, 1-888-397-3742 or [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)
- TransUnion, 1-800-916-8800 or [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)

### Your Follow-up:

- Did you get a copy of your credit report? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Was all of the information correct? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Did you receive your credit score? ☐ Yes ☐ No



## Frequently Asked Questions about Credit



### **Will checking my credit report hurt my score?**

No, you can check your own credit report without harming your credit score. In fact, checking your report regularly is a really good idea because this allows you to make sure there aren't any mistakes. So, take advantage of the one free credit report you're entitled to from each of the three major credit bureaus every year—if you stagger them, you can check your report every four months or so. You can check get your credit report by going online to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) and ordering a report; or, by calling toll-free 877-322-8228. Remember, your credit score does not come with your credit report. You may have to pay a fee to receive your score.



### **Can a potential employer or landlord check my credit report?**

Yes, when you're applying for a job or hoping to rent a property, your potential employer or potential landlord can run your credit report—but only with your permission. And, they will not have access to your credit score, just a shortened, simplified version of your credit report. Why might they want to see your report? It is thought that information on your credit report can provide insight into your character and whether or not you'll be reliable and responsible employee or renter.



### **Should I carry a balance on my credit card from month to month?**

No, not if you can avoid it! There is a myth out there that carrying a balance will help you build and maintain a good credit score. What you should do is avoid spending more than 30% of your available credit and then pay off the balance on your card in-full and on time when the bill comes each and every month. Each of those on-time payments, combined with restrained use of your credit (less than 30% of your credit limit) will help boost your credit score. The catch? If you pay off the balance too early in the month (before the bill comes) your credit report may not record that you've, in fact, used your credit card. So, be sure to wait for the statement to arrive, then pay off the bill on time and in-full.



### **Will I build credit using my debit or prepaid card?**

No. A prepaid or debit card only lets you spend the money you load onto the card. Because both types of card only allow you to spend money you already have, they are not considered to be using credit, and your activity is not reported to the credit bureaus. There are benefits to using debit and prepaid cards—you can't fall into debt with them and you can't be tempted to spend money that you can't afford to spend. But the benefit of careful use of a credit card is that building your credit opens up opportunities for future purchases, loans, lower interest rates, employment, housing, and more. Also, a word of warning: using your debit card leaves you more vulnerable because if someone steals your card information, they have direct access to your bank account.



# A Home of My Own **Chapter**

# 7

## Activities in This Chapter

- III➡ *Activity #16 Preparing for Independence*
- III➡ *Activity #17 Housing Practice Money Map*
- III➡ *Activity #18 My Housing Wants and Needs*
- III➡ *Activity #19 Comparison Shopping for a Home*

## Can I Live Independently?

The desire to live independently is a natural part of adulthood. All adults want to be in control of their own lives and make decisions for themselves! Just because you have a disability doesn't mean you won't be able to enjoy independence. However, it may take planning and preparation to make sure your health, safety, social, recreational, and of course financial needs are met to have a fulfilling independent life.

### III➡ *Activity #16: Preparing for Independence*

There are many responsibilities to being on your own besides managing all of the money topics we've discussed so far. In this activity, review each of the items in the task categories. Place a check mark in the column to indicate if you can do the task listed. Then check the support column if you need support to complete the task and if you have that support in place.

**Neil added a ramp to his front entrance to make his home accessible.**

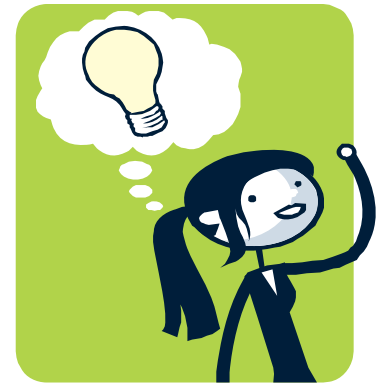


## Preparing for Independence Worksheet

Task	Can Do	Support	
		Need	Have
<b>1. Food</b>			
Meal planning	_____	_____	_____
Meal preparation	_____	_____	_____
Safe food storage	_____	_____	_____
Grocery shopping	_____	_____	_____
<b>2. Personal Care and Hygiene</b>			
Shower and bathe regularly	_____	_____	_____
Schedule hair cuts	_____	_____	_____
Laundry	_____	_____	_____
<b>3. Health</b>			
Determine need for medical help	_____	_____	_____
Schedule medical appointments	_____	_____	_____
Follow medical instructions	_____	_____	_____
Take medication w/out instruction	_____	_____	_____
<b>4. Housekeeping</b>			
Change bed linens	_____	_____	_____
Routine house-cleaning	_____	_____	_____
Call for repairs	_____	_____	_____
<b>5. Emergency and Safety</b>			
Operate locks on doors/windows	_____	_____	_____
Recognize the smell of gas leak	_____	_____	_____
Extinguish fire	_____	_____	_____
Contact police/fire by 911	_____	_____	_____
<b>6. Transportation</b>			
Driver's license	_____	_____	_____
Vehicle	_____	_____	_____
Use public transportation	_____	_____	_____
Arrange for transport	_____	_____	_____
<b>7. Social</b>			
Ask friends to come over	_____	_____	_____
Go somewhere with friends	_____	_____	_____
Hobby or other interest	_____	_____	_____

## Rent or Buy—What’s the Difference?

There are two basic options you have when planning to live independently: rent an apartment or house owned by someone else or buy a home for yourself. There are advantages and disadvantages to both renting and buying.



<b>Commitment</b>	
<b>Rent</b>	<b>Buy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Renting a property is a short-term commitment; you can move once your lease is up if you don’t like the unit or location.</li><li>• Renting is good if you are not sure a neighborhood is where you want to be for a long time or will meet your needs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buying a property is a long-term commitment and can be a home for a very long time; it is a more stable living situation.</li><li>• Buying is good if you have roots in the neighborhood and are sure the location meets your needs.</li></ul>
<b>Terms</b>	
<b>Rent</b>	<b>Buy</b>
<p><b>Month-to-month</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some landlords allow tenants to rent a unit without a time commitment. You can decide to move at any time without penalty. There will be a contract describing the rent, rules, and responsibilities of the landlord and tenant.</li></ul> <p><b>Lease</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some landlords only rent a unit with a time commitment, typically one year. The <b>lease</b> is a legal contract which says something like: “At the end of the year, you can move without penalty or renew the lease for another year.” You may be subject to rent increases every time your lease is up for renewal.</li></ul>	<p><b>Mortgage loan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you don’t have enough cash up front, you will need a loan in order to purchase a home. This is called a <b>mortgage</b>. You make a promise to the lender to repay the loan, with interest, during the course of 15 or 30 years. If you don’t make your loan payments, the lender can sell the property to repay the loan.</li><li>• Monthly payments for housing can be relatively stable over the long term with a fixed rate mortgage loan. Property taxes and insurance may be included in the loan payment but those costs will increase over time.</li></ul>
Regardless of whether you have a lease or rent from month-to-month, if you don’t make your rent payments you will be evicted or removed from the unit.	

### Penny Pincher Says!

Good credit is an important factor in determining your housing options, regardless of whether you rent or buy. A landlord or lender is less likely to approve a person with poor credit because it may predict late or missed payments and could lead to eviction or foreclosure. Poor credit will also increase the interest rate you will pay when borrowing money to purchase a home.

### Lease

A legal contract where one person lends something to another person for a specified time (apartment, vehicle, equipment, etc.), usually in exchange for payments.

### Mortgage

A specific type of loan for the purchase of a home. You make a promise to the lender to repay the loan, with interest, during the course of 15 or 30 years.

<b>Up-front Costs</b>	
<b>Rent</b>	<b>Buy</b>
<b>Security deposit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually an amount of 1-2 month's rent, this money will be kept by the landlord if there is damage to the unit when you move out or if you break the terms of the lease.</li> </ul>	<b>Down payment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depending upon the loan program, you can expect to pay 3.5% – 20% of the purchase price for a down payment.</li> </ul> <b>Closing costs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically 6-8% of the loan amount, these costs include the loan application, property inspection, real estate taxes, homeowner's insurance, etc., and other expenses required to purchase property.</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibilities</b>	
<b>Rent</b>	<b>Buy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The landlord is responsible for repairs, shoveling snow, lawn maintenance, replacing appliances, etc.</li> <li>The landlord will expect you to be a good tenant by keeping the unit clean, respecting the common areas, and following the terms of the lease.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are responsible for any repairs, shoveling snow, lawn maintenance, replacing appliances, etc.</li> <li>It is wise to keep your home clean and in good repair to protect the investment that you are making and ensure the property retains its value.</li> </ul>
<b>Making It "Home"</b>	
<b>Rent</b>	<b>Buy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You will be limited in how you can personalize a rental unit. Any changes such as paint colors/wallpaper, carpet, etc., will need to be approved by the landlord. This includes home modifications needed for accessibility.</li> <li>You will have to pay for any changes and may have to return the unit to its original form when moving out. (See Accessibility on page 60 for more information.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your only limitations to personalizing a home you own are local township/city codes, your money, and possibly Homeowner's Association rules (see page 56). You can paint the walls any color, change the carpet, and remodel the kitchen any way you want.</li> <li>You will have to pay for any changes you want to make, and home improvements, repairs, and accessibility modifications can be substantial. For example, it is not unusual for a new roof to cost \$5,000 or more for a small house.*</li> </ul>

\* According to Roofing Calculator.org (<https://www.roofcalc.org/roofing-shingles-prices/>)

### Other Considerations

<i>Rent</i>	<i>Buy</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You do not own the property and will not build equity by paying rent.</li> <li>Leasing does not require the physical and financial commitment of buying.</li> <li>Renting is a great first step in living independently.</li> <li>If your landlord reports rent payments, you will have the opportunity to build positive credit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With every mortgage loan payment, you are building equity. <b>Equity</b> is the value of an asset (your home), minus what you owe on any loans (mortgage) connected to it.</li> <li>Buying a home is the largest financial transaction that most people will make in their lives. It is an ongoing commitment that should be considered carefully before deciding to buy.</li> <li>Every on-time mortgage payment you make will have a positive impact on your credit.</li> </ul>

### Equity

The value of an asset (such as your home or vehicle) minus what you owe on any loans (such as a mortgage or vehicle loan payment) connected to it.

## What Expenses Can I Expect When Living Independently?

In Chapter 2, as part of Money Mapping, we listed a few monthly expenses which a person will have when living independently, such as rent and utilities. Let's take a closer look at the expenses associated with living on your own. Keep in mind as you look at this list, if you have a roommate or housemate, some of these expenses will be shared.



Elysia rents her own apartment and works on her Money Map with her supports coordinator, Kaylynn, every month to track and manage her housing expenses.





### **Penny Pincher Says!**

Brand new furniture can be expensive! Consider visiting a consignment or thrift store, as used furniture is a great alternative when you are just starting out. You can also find used furniture online on websites such as Craigslist (<https://www.craigslist.org/>) and Facebook Marketplace (<https://www.facebook.com/marketplace/>). Make sure the furniture is clean and in usable condition. Even if it isn't your style, you can dress it up with new paint, pillows, or fabric.

## **Ongoing Expenses**

- *Rent (or mortgage loan payment)*—a monthly payment charged by the landlord to allow you to live in the unit (or paid back to the lender when you have purchased a house)
- *Renter's (or homeowner's) insurance*—a regular payment that protects you by providing money to replace your personal property in case of fire, storm damage, or theft (or provides money to rebuild or repair the structure if you own the property) (see page 64 for more information)
- *Real estate taxes*—amount due to your city/town/county every month that funds police departments, road maintenance, etc. (only if you own the property)
- *Utilities*—a monthly payment for services provided to the unit, such as electricity, water, gas, trash removal, etc.
- *Parking*—some units charge for parking your automobile on-site or in a garage
- *Homeowner's association*—some neighborhoods or complexes charge a monthly fee for such things as snow removal, lawn service, landscaping, etc.
- *Communications*—a monthly bill for telephone, cable TV, and internet access
- *Hygiene, laundry, and housekeeping supplies*—ongoing expenses necessary to keep yourself, clothes, and living space clean and sanitary

## **One-Time Expenses**

In addition to a security deposit (for rent) or down payment/closing costs (for purchase), there are additional one-time expenses to consider when moving out on your own. The amount can be substantial, but remember you are setting up a household of your own!

- *Utilities*—some utility companies require an initial deposit if you have poor or little credit, or charge installation and set-up fees
- *Furniture/appliances*—you may need to purchase items such as a sofa, chairs, dining table, bed, dresser, lamps, desk, TV, stove, refrigerator, microwave, etc.
- *Other household items*—includes items such as kitchen utensils, dishes, pots and pans, bed linens, towels, curtains, vacuum, mop, etc.
- *Moving costs*—includes van rental or hiring a moving company

Friends and family will be excited for you when you move into your own place. They may have furniture and other household items they were planning to donate that they would like to give to you. Let them help you—these things add up! You can always purchase the furniture and household supplies you prefer later, but you can save a lot of money (and time) up front if you accept their generosity.

## Can I Afford It?

Living independently is a serious financial commitment that starts with dependable income from a job, disability benefits, and/or public supports. Revisit Chapter 2 to review income sources.

As a general guide, ongoing housing expenses (rent/mortgage loan payments, real estate taxes, renter's/homeowner's insurance, parking, homeowner's association, and utilities) should not exceed 30% of your gross monthly income. Here is an example:

Gross monthly income:  $\$2,000 \times 0.30 = \$600$   
maximum amount per month for housing expenses

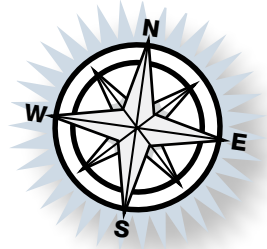
Now enter your information to find the maximum amount you should spend each month on housing:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  $\times 0.30 =$  \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Gross monthly income)

This is your maximum monthly housing expenses.

### ➡ *Activity #17: Housing Practice Money Map*

In order to get a better feel for managing your money when living independently, it's good to plan and practice!



Step 1: Enter the maximum amount you should spend on housing each month in your money map under the Planned Spending column.

Step 2: Enter all of your planned needs and wants from your original money map (Activity #11 on page 23).

Step 3: Calculate your cash flow.

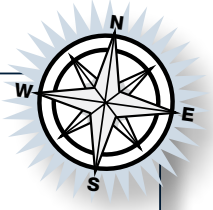
Step 4: Do you have enough money to meet all of your other needs and have enough for wants? If not, revisit needs and wants from Chapter 1.

Step 5: "Practice" living independently, at least financially. Deposit your maximum monthly housing expenses into a savings account and practice managing your other needs and wants with your remaining income. Track how you do using the Actual Spending column.



### **Penny Pincher Says!**

While these guidelines can be helpful, everyone's financial situation is different. If you don't spend much on entertainment or transportation, you may have more room in your budget for housing. And if you're living in a big city, it may be impossible to keep your housing costs at or below 30% of your gross monthly income.



## My Housing Practice Money Map

Month: \_\_\_\_\_

My Needs Descriptions	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
1. Maximum monthly housing expenses	\$ _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
7. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
8. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Needs	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Wants Descriptions	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
1. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Wants	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Monthly Income	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Cash Flow (Income – Expenses)	\$ _____	\$ _____

## Affordability Options

Depending upon where you live (see What Do I Need? below), 30% of your gross income may not be enough to actually cover housing expenses. Some cities and towns have higher housing costs than others. Don't be discouraged. There are other affordability options you can investigate in order to make it work.

- **Shared housing**

Consider sharing your home (and the expenses that come with it) with a spouse, relatives, and/or roommates or housemates.

- **Home and Community-Based Services waiver programs**

If you receive waiver services, your waiver may provide supports you need to live in your own home. These may include home modifications, assistive technology, durable medical equipment, and attendant services. (See page 70 for more information about waivers.)

- **Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8)**

This program provides subsidies to persons with low income and is paid directly to private landlords. Learn more at <https://section-8-housing.org/pennsylvania/>.

- **Public housing**

Public housing provides decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Public housing comes in all sizes and types, from scattered single-family houses to high-rise apartments. Learn more at [https://www.hud.gov/topics/rental\\_assistance/phprog](https://www.hud.gov/topics/rental_assistance/phprog).

## What Do I Need?

Before making a decision about housing, consider what you need in a place of your own. There are a wide variety of housing options available. If you narrow down what's important to you, it will be easier to find a place where you will be happy.

### How much space do I need?

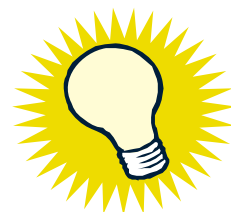
The first thing to consider is how much space do you need? If you are living alone, a single-room efficiency or one-bedroom apartment may be enough space. If you will have roommates, you each will probably want your own bedroom. Consider the common living areas as well. Will there be enough room for comfortable seating or social activities? Are there other amenities, such as on-site parking or laundry facilities, that are important to you? Do you have enough space to store your assistive technology (wheelchairs, scooters, Hoyer lift, etc.)?



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### Penny Pincher Says!

If you are considering living with a roommate, even if that person is a good friend or relative, be sure to agree on household responsibilities and lifestyles before you move in together. Even best friends can find it hard to live together!



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### REMEMBER

- A **need** is something you must have to survive, like a place to live and enough food to eat.
- A **want** is something you might like to have, but you don't need it to survive and you don't have to have it right away. You can save to have it later.



## Type of Property

Once you know how much space you need, look at the types of properties that will fit your needs. Apartment buildings contain single-story rental units that usually share a main entrance. These buildings may be small, as few as four units, or bigger complexes of several buildings. Some have elevators, some do not. Condominiums are similar to apartment buildings except the units are purchased, not rented. Townhouses are rows of attached, multi-story units with individual entrances, giving it more of a house-like feel. Townhouses can be rented or purchased. Lastly, there are single-family homes that can also be rented or purchased.

### Penny Pincher Says!

If you need help with mobility or you are a wheelchair user, consider choosing a single-story or first-floor apartment—elevators are great, but sometimes they break down or aren't usable if there is an emergency.

## Location, Location, Location

The most beautiful home with the perfect amount of space for your needs may still fall short if it isn't in the ideal location. If you have a neighborhood or specific area in which you want to live, that's a good place to start. However, you may also want to consider distance to a job, family and friends, grocery store, a pharmacy, your bank, etc. Will you need access to public transportation or other frequently used services? Being close to the things that are important to you or that you need, can make a big difference in your quality of life.

## Accessibility

**Sam loves that his home is close enough to his favorite library for him to walk there with his service dog, Clover.**

Depending on your individual situation, make sure that the unit you are considering has the accessibility that you need. For example, is the kitchen space adequate for meal preparation? Are the doorways wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair? Are their door levers instead of knobs? Does the bathroom have grab bars in the shower? Is there a ramp or elevator that will accommodate your wheelchair?

If you are receiving a housing waiver or subsidy, the federal law requires landlords to make reasonable changes or accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services so that a person with a disability has an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a housing unit. If you are renting from a private landlord, reasonable changes are required but you will be responsible for the cost of changes. You may also have to return the unit to its original condition when moving out. Learn more about fair housing and reasonable accommodations at <http://www.equalhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FairHousingGuideforPeoplewithDisabilities.pdf>.





## Availability

Once you have determined what you need and where you want to live, it's time to find a place! That may not be as easy as it sounds. The perfect unit or place may not be available in the neighborhood you want. The perfect unit may be more expensive than you can afford. There may be a waiting list for the perfect unit if you are using a subsidy. You may have to look in a different neighborhood, adjust the type of housing, or look into other affordability options. Be flexible on the things you want (but not necessarily on the things you need), adjust what you're looking for as necessary, and just keep looking!

Activity #18 will help you think through which housing options are needs, and which housing options you might be able to be more flexible about.

### ➡ *Activity #18: My Housing Needs and Wants*

When identifying a place to live where you will be independent, safe, and content, carefully consider what you need vs. what you want (those things that can be flexible). For example, if you are employed, maybe living within five miles of your job with access to public transportation is a need. A want might be living within five miles of a movie theater.



### **Penny Pincher Says!**

Houses and apartments are listed for rent and for sale all the time—just because you don't see what you're looking for today, doesn't mean it won't show up next week or next month. You can search for apartments at [PAHousingSearch.com](http://PAHousingSearch.com).

### **A Home of Her Own**

Alexa braided three funding sources to modify her new home. The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation paid for a ceiling-mounted lift and the installation of an electric door opener on the front door. A Home and Community-Based Services waiver paid for modifications to her floors, walls, and three other doors. And, a grant from the Cumberland County Housing and Redevelopment Authority was used to install the



Universal Remote Control home automation system (a type of "smart home" technology). For a video of Alexa showing her modified house, visit [vimeo.com/169888493](https://vimeo.com/169888493).

**Alexa modified her home's entrance to be accessible so she can come and go as she pleases.**

## My Housing Needs and Wants

	Need	Want
Location: (city, town, neighborhood, etc.)		
Distance to:		
Family and friends		
Job		
Health care facilities		
Pharmacy and grocery store		
Entertainment		
Access to Public Transportation		
Type of property: (apartment, townhouse, etc.)		
Number of bedrooms:		
Number of bathrooms:		
Accessibility:		
Amenities:		
On-site laundry		
In-unit laundry		
Parking		
Community area		
Other:		
Assistance accepted: (vouchers, subsidies, etc.)		

## Finding a Place

Now that you've identified what you need and what you want, it's time to go see what's out there.

### Activity #19: Comparison Shopping for a Home

#### Housing Comparison

Unit Comparison	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
Location:			
Type of Property:			
Bedrooms:			
Bathrooms:			
Accessibility:			
Amenities:			
Other:			
Utilities Included:			
Assistance Accepted:			

Cost Comparison	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
Security Deposit/ Down Payment:	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

**Compare to Amount I Have Saved: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Monthly Rent/ Mortgage Payment:	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Utilities (not included):	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Other:	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Total Housing Expenses:	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

**Compare to My Maximum Monthly Housing Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (from page 58)**



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### **Penny Pincher Says!**

Here's some more information about insurance companies:

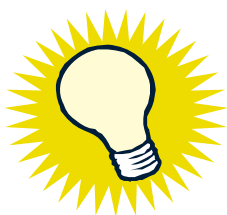
- By law, insurance companies are prohibited from charging different rates based on an applicant's race, religion, disability, national origin, and gender.
- Many insurance companies will allow you to bundle your policy with another policy, like your auto insurance, making the cost cheaper than purchasing two separate policies.

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### **Peril**

An insurance term for the cause of a possible loss, like a fire.

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### **REMEMBER**

You may need to buy additional insurance for property such as medical equipment.

## **Insurance**

Insurance means protection from loss. You can purchase insurance for all kinds of things. There's homeowner's insurance, renter's insurance, auto insurance, and more. When planning to live independently, consider what types of insurance you may need.

### **Homeowner's Insurance**

Homeowner's insurance is meant for individuals who own their own home, and protects your home and your personal property. It may also protect you against lawsuits if someone gets hurt on your property. When purchasing any kind of insurance, always shop around and compare coverage and price.

### ***What are the Different Types of Coverage?***

Homeowner's insurance policies usually contain a package of coverages that offers protection when a peril occurs. A **peril** is the cause of a possible loss, like a fire.

Here are some of the most common types of coverage:

- *Dwelling* coverage pays for damage to your house and structures attached to your house, such as attached garages. This includes damages to fixtures such as plumbing, electrical wiring, heating, and permanently installed cooling systems.
- *Other Structures* coverage pays for damage to structures not attached to the dwelling. These include detached garages, sheds, fences, guest houses, etc.
- *Personal Property* coverage reimburses you for damage to—or theft of—your personal property. This covers things like furniture, appliances, electronics, lawn equipment, clothing, etc. It also protects your belongings even when they aren't on your property. Be sure to ask your agent if your medical equipment is covered.
- *Loss of Use* coverage pays for additional living expenses if you can't live in your home (because of a covered loss) while it's being repaired.
- *Personal Liability* protects you, your relatives in the household, and residents in your household under the age of 21 if you are sued and found legally responsible for injury or damage to their property. This coverage also extends to students under the age of 24 enrolled full-time at school or college (with certain exceptions). If you have someone helping you at home, ask your agent, "What happens if someone gets hurt?"
- *Medical Payments to Others* provides coverage for medical bills for people hurt on your property or hurt by your pets.

### ***What Doesn't Your Homeowner's Insurance Cover?***

What is covered depends on the policy you buy. There are some common exclusions like flood, landslides, and earthquakes. Be sure to talk to your agent or insurance company about what your policy covers.

## Renter's Insurance

Renter's insurance is often overlooked, but for a small monthly expense (usually between \$20 and \$30), you can save a lot of money if something happens to your belongings. Renter's insurance is meant for individuals who are renting a home, and it protects you and your property from damages, theft, and liability, based on the type of policy you have. If your apartment is broken into and your belongings are stolen, renters' insurance can help you replace them. If you include **liability insurance**, it can also protect you from a lawsuit if someone is injured or suffers property damage while in your rental unit. Renters' insurance often protects your belongings when you aren't at home as well. If you lose your luggage while travelling, have your laptop stolen at a coffee shop, or have items stolen out of your car, you may be able to file a claim on your policy.

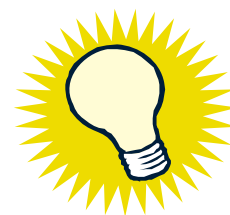
## Auto Insurance

Public transportation can be a convenient and affordable way to get around, but depending on where you live and what your circumstances are, sometimes having your own vehicle is a necessity. If you own a vehicle, it's important to be insured—in fact, it's the law! As with any other financial decision, always shop around and compare options and prices.

For more information about homeowner's, renter's, and auto insurance, or to file a complaint, visit Pennsylvania Insurance Department's website at [www.insurance.pa.gov](http://www.insurance.pa.gov) or call 877-881-6388.

## Liability Insurance

Protects you from a lawsuit if someone is injured or suffers property damage while in your rental unit.



### REMEMBER

If your name isn't on the policy, you aren't covered, no matter if it's your landlord's homeowner's insurance or your roommate's renter's insurance. You can begin a policy at any time, regardless of how long ago you signed your lease.



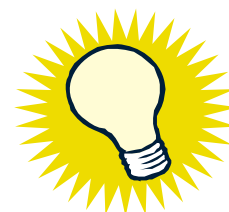
### Penny Pincher Says!

#### You've Just Been in a Car Crash—Now What?

Being in a vehicle crash is scary, confusing, and frustrating. But there are a few things you should make sure to do right away following a crash:

- Contact the police by calling 911, especially if there's an injury!
- Get each driver's name, insurance company name, and phone number;
- If you can't get this information, then get each car's license plate number;
- Each car's year, make and model;
- Names and contact information for any witnesses;
- The names, badge numbers, and contact information of any police officers who come to the scene, as well as the police report number.

When you can, after the crash, write down the date, time, location, and what happened. If possible, take pictures. This will help when reporting the claim to your insurance company.



### REMEMBER

Some people might find it helpful to get the app, WreckCheck, to remind you what to do in the case of an accident. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) developed this free mobile app that outlines what to do immediately after a crash and walks you through a step-by-step process to create your own accident report.



## **Additional Housing Resources**

### **The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

HUD is a government agency that provides housing assistance and makes sure that everyone has access to “fair and equal” housing. Every state has local offices. HUD offers many programs including education about homeownership, home improvements, rental assistance, and help with housing discrimination, just to name a few. Learn more at <https://www.hud.gov/states/pennsylvania/renting/hawebbsites>.

### **Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA)**

PHFA helps both renters and homebuyers find affordable housing. PHFA also has a program to help people with disabilities who are first-time homebuyers. PHFA has a network of non-profit housing counseling agencies across Pennsylvania that assist with free counseling services. A housing counselor can help you work through your money map, assess your housing needs, and create a plan of action so you can reach your goal. Check out the Hot Topics section at <https://www.phfa.org/mhp/serviceprovider/> to locate resources in your county.

### **Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS)**

RHLS is a nonprofit law firm with the mission to create housing and economic opportunity in underserved communities in Pennsylvania. RHLS has a program called Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP) to help people with low income connect to and maintain affordable utility and energy services within their homes. Learn more at [www.rhls.org](http://www.rhls.org) or call 215-572-7300.

### **Self Determination Housing Project of Pennsylvania (SDHP)**

SDHP is a statewide nonprofit organization which promotes self-determination and control in housing for people with disabilities and older adults in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. SDHP’s educational programming includes the Prepared Renter Education Program (PREP) which is offered in a train-the-trainer format to agencies and their staff. PREP’s primary objective is to help advocates and case workers educate their client(s) on how to prepare for a successful rental experience. PREP covers important housing topics including: preparing to rent, the search for housing, working with a landlord, how to be a good tenant and neighbor, and strategies for successfully maintaining housing. For more information, visit [www.sdhp.org](http://www.sdhp.org) or call 610-873-9595.

### **PALawHelp.org**

[PALawHelp.org](http://PALawHelp.org) connects to all the statewide legal service organizations and also has a good listing of statewide legal assistance resources.

### **Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania (HECPA)**

HECPA is focused on fair housing and has extensive educational resources at [www.equalhousing.org](http://www.equalhousing.org). Their new booklet *Know Your Rights as a Renter in Pennsylvania* is full of important and helpful information for anyone who is considering renting a home and can be found at <http://www.equalhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/11.18-digital-copy-of-Know-Your-Rights-as-a-Renter-in-PA-3.pdf>.

### **The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**

The USDA provides homeownership opportunities to rural Americans, and home renovation and repair programs. USDA also provides financing to seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income rural residents in multi-unit housing complexes to ensure that they are able to make rent payments. Learn more at <https://www.usda.gov/topics/rural/housing-assistance>.

# Assistive Technology

# Chapter 8

## Activity in This Chapter

➡ *Activity #20 Fund the Assistive Technology You Need*

## What Is Assistive Technology (AT) and Why Are These Devices and Services So Important?

Assistive technology (AT) devices and services are items that help people with disabilities be more independent and live life the way they want to live it. The federal definition is more formal and states, “Assistive technology includes any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. An AT service directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.” (P.L. 100 - 407)

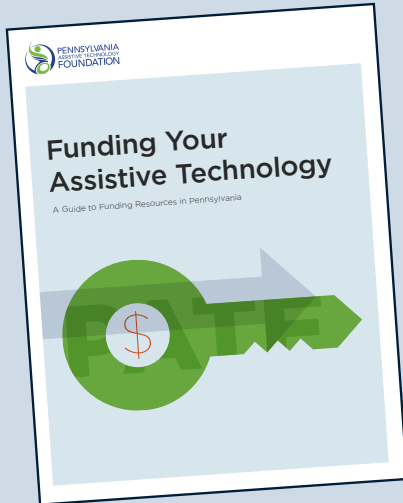
Examples of AT are:

- An adapted vehicle with a ramp, lowered floor and hand controls that makes it possible for a person who uses a wheelchair to get out into the community, visit friends, or go to work.
- A computer or iPad that helps a person who has a learning disability do well in school.
- A hearing aid that helps make it possible for a person who has a hearing loss to communicate with friends.

**For these brothers, an all-terrain vehicle makes it possible to get around the farm.**



## Learn More About How to Pay for Assistive Technology (AT)



In 2019, Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) published *Funding Your Assistive Technology: A Guide to Funding Resources in Pennsylvania*. This guide covers a variety of topics in detail, with chapters that include:

- What Is Assistive Technology?
- Choosing My Assistive Technology
- Developing a Successful Funding Strategy
- Home and Community-Based Waiver Programs (including Community HealthChoices)
- A Public and Private Funding Resource List
- Saving for Assistive Technology: ABLE Accounts and Special Needs Trusts

You can download a copy at <https://patf.us/FundingYourAT> or call 888-744-1938 to request a copy.

## How Can You Find Out About Assistive Technology (AT)?

Pennsylvania's statewide assistive technology program is named TechOWL (formerly Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology, or PIAT). TechOWL contracts with a number of agencies across the state to:

- Provide equipment demonstrations.
- Help you borrow equipment from the equipment lending library.
- Refer you to equipment recycling or reuse programs, where you may be able to locate pre-owned devices.
- Administer the Telecommunications Device Distribution Program (TDDP) and iCanConnect. These programs provide free phones to qualified individuals who need special features.

For more information, go to <https://techowlpa.org/> or call 800-204-7428.

## How Can You Get the AT You Need?

It can be a very confusing and difficult task figuring out who can help you pay for the assistive technology you need. Sometimes the cost is covered through your health insurance policy, or by a governmental agency, or by a non-profit organization. Other times, you may have to pay, in part or in full, for the device yourself.

Your ability to receive grant money from a funding source may depend on a number of factors, including your type of disability, your age, when you acquired your disability, your income, where you live, the type of insurance you have, the AT device you need and the threshold guidelines of a particular program.

Here are some examples:

- Health insurance (including Medical Assistance and Medicare) pays for Durable Medical Equipment (DME). Examples include hospital beds, wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, and Hoyer lifts.
- The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has developed Home and Community-Based Services waiver programs, called “waivers” for short, that include services that may pay for home modifications (accessibility modifications) such as ramps, stair glides, roll-in showers; vehicle adaptations, such as ramps, lowered floors, tie-downs and hand controls; environmental controls, such as switches for lights and automatic door openers; and, software and applications for computers and tablet technology.
- Schools will pay for adapted equipment if it’s necessary for the education of a student with a disability. To be eligible for payment, the equipment must be included in the student’s Individual Education Program (IEP).
- The Commonwealth’s Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) may pay for AT devices that help a person with a disability get or keep a job.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides benefits, including hearing aids and home modifications, to veterans.
- Some non-profit organizations, including United Cerebral Palsy Association or the Multiple Sclerosis Society, may have small grant programs for people who have the type of disability their organization supports.

## Funding Your AT

### Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation

If you’re unsure of your funding options, or learn you’re not eligible for any government funding, or you just want to pay for the device(s) yourself without any hassle, try the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF). PATF is a statewide, non-profit organization that provides low-interest loans to buy AT devices. PATF staff also provides information about other possible funding resources so that your loan is as small as possible. Many PATF borrowers would not qualify for loans from traditional banks or credit unions. PATF serves Pennsylvanians of all ages, income levels and disability diagnosis or health conditions.

PATF has two loan programs:

- A Mini-Loan program for loans from \$100 to \$2,000 at 0% interest (\$20/month minimum repayment).
- A Low-Interest Loan program (currently 3.75%) for loans between \$2,000 to \$60,000 with extended repayment terms. If you have poor credit, but are able to repay a loan, PATF may be able to **guarantee** your loan for up to \$35,000.

There is no other program like PATF in Pennsylvania! For more information, call 888-744-1938; or go to the website, [www.patf.us](http://www.patf.us).



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### Penny Pincher Says!

Taking out a Mini-Loan is a great way to build credit! Every month, PATF reports repayments to the credit reporting agencies so that your FICO scores will increase when you pay your loan on time.

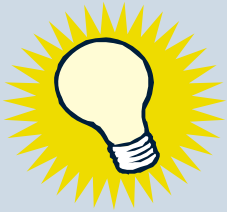
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### Guarantee

A guarantee is a promise or assurance (typically in writing) to assume responsibility for something. A loan guarantee is a promise by someone to assume the debt obligation of a borrower if he does not repay his loan.

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### REMEMBER

- Information Referral Tool (IRT) will help you identify long term services and supports (waivers) that may be beneficial to you based on your specific needs. Visit <https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/irt> or call the PA LINK Call Center at 800-753-8827.
- For additional information about waivers, go to Pennsylvania Health Law Project's website at [www.phlp.org](http://www.phlp.org) or call 800-274-8827.

## Important Definitions That You Should Know

**Durable Medical Equipment (DME)** is a medical term. A device may be considered DME and be a covered item by an insurance policy if:

- It is reasonable and necessary for the individual patient,
- It can withstand repeated use,
- It is primarily used to serve a medical purpose,
- It is not helpful to a person who does not have a disability, an illness or injury, and
- It is appropriate for use in the home.

**Medical Assistance (also called Medicaid)** is a health insurance program for eligible persons who are low-income and children under 21 with serious disabilities regardless of parental income. People who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) can usually get Medical Assistance automatically. If you have questions, contact your local county assistance office at <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/findfacilsandlocs/countyassistanceofficecontactinformation/index.htm>.

**Medicare** is a federal health insurance program for individuals 65 and older that pays for a variety of healthcare expenses. If you are younger than 65 and have a permanent disability or a medical condition, you may also be eligible for Medicare benefits.

Most U.S. citizens and permanent residents earn the right to enroll in Medicare by working and paying their taxes for a minimum required period. However, even if you haven't worked long enough to be entitled to Medicare benefits, you may still be eligible to enroll, but you might have to pay more. For more information, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/medicare> or call Social Security at 800-772-1213.

**Home and Community-Based Services waiver programs** are provided by the state and fund a variety of in-home and community services and supports for people with disabilities and older adults, including assistive technology and home and vehicle modifications. For more information about waivers for older adults, adults with physical disabilities, and adults with traumatic brain injury, visit <http://dhs.pa.gov/learnaboutdhs/waiverinformation/>. For more information about waivers for children and adults with intellectual disabilities or autism, visit <http://dhs.pa.gov/learnaboutdhs/dhsorganization/officeofdevelopmentalprograms/>.

**Community HealthChoices** is a new waiver program for individuals over 21 years old with a disability who previously received services through the Independence, CommCare, or Aging Waivers. These individuals select or are enrolled in one of three managed care organizations that have contracts with the state. Services are obtained through service providers who have contracts with these managed care organizations. This program is in effect in 14 counties in Southwest PA and 5 counties in Southeast PA as of January 2019. The rest of the state will be added in January 2020. Services include all the Home and Community-Based Services formerly provided by waivers for older adults and adults with physical disabilities or traumatic brain injury. For more information about Community HealthChoices, visit <http://www.healthchoices.pa.gov/info/about/community/>.



To be eligible for waiver services there are two requirements:

- **Functional eligibility:** A person must have substantial limitations in several areas of functioning (like mobility, activities of daily living, cooking, etc.). An agency or the county (depending on the waiver applied for) will do an assessment to determine functional eligibility.
- **Financial eligibility:** Individuals who are not employed must have countable income below \$2250/month (2018) (for an individual) and countable resources (“assets”) below \$8,000 (includes savings accounts, stocks and bonds). Individuals who are employed can qualify with higher incomes under a special eligibility category called MAWD (see below).

**Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD)** is a category of Medical Assistance with higher income and asset limits than regular Medical Assistance or Home and Community-Based Services waivers. The income limit depends on how much of an individual’s income is from employment versus Social Security or other unearned income. The asset limit is \$10,000. To qualify, the individual must have a significant disability or medical condition and must also be employed. Employment consists of being paid for work by a company, business, or other individual, or self-employment. There is no minimum number of hours an individual must work to qualify for MAWD. However, the individual must provide written proof of employment. A person who qualifies for MAWD gets full Medical Assistance coverage, and if they meet functional eligibility requirements for a waiver (see above), they are also considered to meet the financial eligibility requirements, even if their income and assets are above the regular limits for the waiver. For more information about MAWD visit <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/healthcaremedicalassistance/medicalassistancebenefitsforworkerswithdisabilities/>.

## Additional Funding Resources

### Non-Profit and Disability-Specific Organizations

Local organizations, such as United Cerebral Palsy affiliates, Muscular Dystrophy Association, ALS, Multiple Sclerosis Society, Lions Club and others, may have small grant programs to support the needs of people with disabilities. Eligibility criteria and available funding may change from time to time, so you should contact these organizations for updated grant guidelines.

### Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS)

DHS is the state agency in Pennsylvania that oversees community services for people with disabilities. Two of the offices, the Office of Long Term Living and the Office of Developmental Programs, administer the waiver programs for people with physical or intellectual disabilities, people who have traumatic brain injuries, and people with autism. A wide variety of services are included in the waiver programs that can support independent living for people with disabilities. Assistive technology, including accessibility adaptation, vehicle adaptations, and durable medical equipment are services that are included in the waivers. You may apply for benefits online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us) or by contacting DHS at 800-692-7462.



**Richard is more independent in his accessible bathroom.**

## **Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)**

OVR provides vocational rehabilitation services to help people with disabilities prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment. Assistive Technology is an eligible service. The website is <http://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/ovr/Pages/default.aspx>.

## **Advocacy Organizations**

### **Client Assistance Program (CAP)**

Pennsylvania CAP is a statewide advocacy organization whose staff will provide free assistance to people with disabilities who are seeking or receiving services from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS), and Centers for Independent Living (CILs). For more information, call 888-745-2357 (toll free) or email [admin@equalemployment.org](mailto:admin@equalemployment.org).

### **Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP)**

DRP is a statewide, non-profit organization that can help you access waiver services, including assistive technology. DRP's mission is to advance, protect and advocate for the human, civil, and legal rights of Pennsylvanians with disabilities. For more information contact the office at 800-692-7443 (voice) or email [intake@disabilityrightspa.org](mailto:intake@disabilityrightspa.org).

### **Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP)**

PHLP provides free legal services to consumers with lower incomes, seniors, and persons with disabilities who have difficulty accessing publicly-funded healthcare coverage or services (including Home and Community-Based Services). Contact the office at 800-274-3258 or email [staff@phlp.org](mailto:staff@phlp.org).

## **A College Degree Made Possible by AT**

Tyler is working on earning a bachelor's degree at college. But, Tyler has Myasthenia Gravis, and sometimes has to miss class due to fatigue and pain. Walking longer distances is difficult for Tyler. This is why he credits his new scooter with the opportunity to finish his degree. After his 15-year-old scooter was failing and insurance denied his claim, he started an online fundraiser to buy a new scooter. At the end of the summer, with classes fast approaching and only half the money raised, Tyler and his family applied for a Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation loan to cover the rest of the cost.

Tyler's new scooter disassembles easily for transport and does well in the snowy northwestern Pennsylvania winters. Tyler also uses a cane for support while walking, a shower bench and grab bars for stability in the bathroom, and a ramp to make it easier to enter and exit his home. Thanks to assistive technology, Tyler is well on his way to graduation!

**Tyler uses his scooter to get from class to class on campus.**



## Activity #20: Fund the Assistive Technology You Need

What are the devices or services you need and possible funding resources?

Device

Possible Funding Source

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Laura enjoys rowing on the Schuylkill.**



**Suria has a smart doorbell and a camera to see who is at her door when she's inside.**



**Kelvin is able to scan and read his own mail.**



# Chapter 9

## Adult Decision-Making



### Penny Pincher Says!

Everybody has to make important decisions throughout their lives. This section explains some of the legal terms you should know when it comes to decision-making power.

### One Last Important Point...Legal Information About Decision-Making

The law assumes that all people 18 and older, including people with disabilities, have the capacity to make decisions for themselves. This assumption can be overcome, however, when circumstances suggest otherwise. One way to do so is after a hearing in court, where a judge decides, based on expert testimony, that the ability of a particular individual to make decisions is so diminished that he or she is unable to properly manage personal finances and/or properly protect personal health and safety. Such a decision can also be made by a government agency or by a treating physician. When such a determination has been made, we say that the person is *incapacitated* or *incompetent*. In these situations, another individual (the *substitute decision maker* or *guardian*) is usually given the power to make decisions about property management and/or personal health and safety on behalf of the incapacitated person. This *substitute decision maker* can be chosen either by the incapacitated individual, by the court, or by a government agency.

**Michael gets guidance from his father before signing the bank documents for his new adapted vehicle.**



The standard for competency varies depending on the subject matter. An individual who is not competent to manage financial affairs, for example, may still be competent to make his or her own healthcare or other personal life decisions.

### Guiding Questions to Ask in Considering Decision-Making Support Options

In considering what the right decision-making support for individuals with disabilities may be, here are some key questions families may ask:

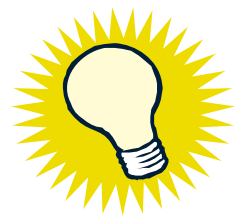
1. What kind of decision is being made?
2. Has the person made a decision like this before?
3. Has the person been assisted to understand the risks and benefits?
4. How big is the impact of this decision in the person's life?
5. How long would the person live with the decision?
6. How hard would it be to undo?
7. Most important: What is the least restrictive level of support that might work?

*Borrowed in part from "Guardianship and Alternatives for Decision-Making Support" published by Got Transition™*

### Decision-Making Power Given by the Person

A *power of attorney (POA)* is a document in which a person, called the *principal*, gives another person or organization, called the *agent* or *attorney-in-fact*, the power to act on his or her behalf. For example, the principal might want an agent to handle his or her banking account. Traditionally, a POA only stays in effect as long as the principal is still competent. However, a special kind of POA, called a *durable POA*, includes language which makes it clear that the POA remains in effect even after the principal becomes incompetent. The durable POA can also be written so that it takes effect only when the principal becomes incompetent. In this way, the individual can choose his/her own substitute decision maker and not leave it up to the courts.

An *advance directive* is a document written by a person which directs the kind of healthcare that the person should receive if he or she becomes unconscious or otherwise mentally incapacitated. Examples of advance directives include *living wills*, which give instructions on the kinds of treatment a person wants to receive in particular situations (terminal illness, persistent vegetative state, need for respirator, dialysis or other life-saving treatment, etc.), and *powers of attorney for health care*, which appoint another person to make healthcare decisions when the original person becomes incompetent. Special forms of these documents are also used by individuals with mental illness—they are called *mental health advance directives* and *mental health powers of attorney*. Pennsylvania law includes directions and suggested forms for creating these various kinds of advance directives.



#### REMEMBER

Sometimes people need help with making decisions. There are a variety of legal options available depending on your needs.



Individuals who may not be competent to handle their own financial affairs may still be competent to create an advanced directive or a durable power of attorney. Before creating any such document for a person with potential competency issues, however, an attorney who specializes in these kinds of matters should be consulted.

### **Decision-Making Power Given by the Courts or Government Agencies**

*Guardianship* results from a legal proceeding in which a court finds that a person is unable to make independent decisions for him or herself; the court then appoints a guardian to make those decisions for the person. A *guardian of the estate* has the power to make decisions about a person's property or *estate*, which means anything that the person owns. A *guardian of the person* has the power to make decisions about the person's health, safety, housing arrangements, etc. The law in Pennsylvania allows for either a *limited or plenary guardianship*. Under a *limited guardianship*, the court determines that the person, or *ward*, is unable to do some, but not all, of the things necessary to take care of his or her person or property. In such a case, the guardian can only exercise the legal powers specifically listed by the court order. However, in almost all cases, the courts find that the person, or ward, is totally incapable of caring for him or herself or property. In these cases, the court appoints a *plenary guardian*, who is given the power to exercise almost all of the person's legal rights and powers. There are a few powers—things like consenting to admission to a mental institution, giving up parental rights, or consenting to sterilization—which the guardian cannot exercise on behalf of the ward. Guardianship is the most restrictive kind of substitute decision making; it often leaves the person being represented with almost no control over his or her own life.

**Lucy and Katherine plan for their financial future with their father.**



A *representative payee* is an individual or organization named by a government agency, such as the Social Security Administration or the Veterans Administration, to manage governmental payments for the benefit of the *beneficiary*, who is the person entitled to receive the benefits. When someone wants to become a representative payee, he or she must file a petition with the relevant agency to demonstrate the need. In general, it is a simpler process to be named a representative payee than it is to be named a guardian. It also requires less ongoing paperwork. Becoming a representative payee does not give a person any power over other assets of the beneficiary or of his or her person. However, for many people with disabilities, their main source of income is governmental benefits (such as supplemental security income or social security disability insurance), so having a representative payee for those benefits may make other substitute decision-making, such as guardianship, unnecessary.

For individuals who do not have a court-appointed guardian, a doctor may, in the course of treatment, determine that the patient is not competent to make healthcare decisions (because he/she doesn't understand the consequences of the medical choices and/or because he/she can't communicate a consistent medical choice to the doctor). In that situation—assuming that the patient hasn't already created a living will or healthcare power of attorney that would provide the necessary guidance—Pennsylvania law allows certain family members of the patient (the *health care representative*) to make medical decisions on the patient's behalf. Under the statute, priority in decision-making authority goes first to the patient's spouse, then adult children, then parents, then adult siblings, and then adult grandchildren.

### Supported Decision-Making

People can get help with decision-making even if they don't have a legal guardian. This happens all the time, when people ask family and friends for advice before they make important choices. However, it is possible to make this advice-giving process a more formal one. A person with a disability can designate one or more people as their official supporters. He or she can then ask those supporters for advice whenever a decision needs to be made. An official supported decision-making agreement can even be created. This document gives the names of the supporters and describes the kind of advice they are allowed to give—advice on financial matters, health care issues, safety issues, living arrangements, etc. It is important to remember, though, that this is not like a guardianship. The ultimate choice on what to do remains with the person who has the disability, no matter what kind of advice the supporters give. For more information on supported decision-making, please visit the Center for Public Representation's Supported Decision-Making website at <https://supporteddecisions.org/>, or The Arc of Texas's document at [https://www.thearcoftexas.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Supported\\_Decision\\_Making\\_For\\_Families\\_2016-06.pdf](https://www.thearcoftexas.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Supported_Decision_Making_For_Families_2016-06.pdf).

### Designating Others to Receive Medical Information—HIPAA Rights

Under a federal law known as the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)*, hospitals and doctors are required to protect the privacy of their patients' medical information. This even includes not discussing medical information with a patient's family. HIPAA rights can, however, be waived by the patient. Such a waiver can be provided formally—by a written document—or informally, as when a patient brings family members with him or her to a doctor's appointment and doesn't object when a family member asks for information about the patient. If a patient is incompetent, however, doctors will disclose medical information to the *patient's guardian, health care agent, or health care representative* without seeking the patient's prior approval.



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### Penny Pincher Says!

Disability Rights Pennsylvania has developed a guide entitled "Consent, Capacity, and Substitute Decision-Making." The purpose of the guide is to help people with disabilities and their families be better informed about the important issues related to decision-making and thus assure that this right is protected for all. The guide is available at <https://www.disabilityrightspa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CompleteGuideCapacityConsentSubDecMakingFEB2018.pdf>. It includes chapters on consent and capacity to make decisions, health care decision-making, powers of attorney, guardianships, and trusts.

# 10 Chapter Are You Ready To Go?

## You're Almost There, One Last Step...

A big part of being more financially independent is having a personal financial file. This file should contain anything you might need to be established as an adult, allowing you to open a bank account, to build credit, and to help you get the services you need to live independently. You will need to create a system that works for you. Here are some suggestions:

### Your Road to Financial Independence

- ☐ Investigate your eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) [www.ssa.gov/ssi/](http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/).
- ☐ Explore your eligibility for Home and Community-Based Services waiver programs ("waivers"):
  - <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/alternativestonursinghomes/index.htm> or
  - <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/learnaboutdhs/dhsorganization/officeofdevelopmentalprograms/>.
- ☐ Register with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) if you're interested in working or need help keeping your job at <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/ovr/Pages/default.aspx>.
- ☐ Have a copy of your Social Security card.
- ☐ Obtain a driver's license or a non-driver's identification card.
- ☐ Establish a relationship with a bank or credit union (obtain a debit card).
- ☐ Register to vote (age 18).
- ☐ Register for Selective Service (if male) <https://www.sss.gov/Home/registrationm>.
- ☐ Gather healthcare and community services information onto a USB flash drive and keep it with you. Be sure to include:
  - Personal identification information,
  - Health insurance policy number,
  - Doctors' and specialists' contact information,
  - Prescriptions,
  - Durable Medical Equipment (DME) vendor contact information, and
  - Service coordinator/case manager/supports broker contact information.

## Are You Ready to Start Managing Your Money?

By reading this book and completing the activities, you've learned a lot about your finances and how to manage your financial future.

Put a check mark next to each activity you have completed:

- \_\_\_ Activity #1: What I Need and What I Want (p. 3)
- \_\_\_ Activity #2: My Money Habits (p. 3)
- \_\_\_ Activity #3: Smart Money Habits (p. 4)
- \_\_\_ Activity #4: Calculate Your Monthly Income (p. 8)
- \_\_\_ Activity #5: Track Expenses: Keep Cash Receipts (p. 9)
- \_\_\_ Activity #6: Organize Your Cash Expenses (p. 10)
- \_\_\_ Activity #7: Organize Your Recurring Monthly Expenses (p. 11)
- \_\_\_ Activity #8: Organize Your Credit Card Charges (p. 12)
- \_\_\_ Activity #9: Bring It All Together! (p. 13)
- \_\_\_ Activity #10: Comparison Shopping (p. 18)
- \_\_\_ Activity #11: Complete Your Personal Money Map (p. 22)
- \_\_\_ Activity #12: What Am I Saving For? (p. 26)
- \_\_\_ Activity #13: What Will I Do To Save? (p. 27)
- \_\_\_ Activity #14: Protect Yourself from Identity Theft (p. 41)
- \_\_\_ Activity #15: Get and Understand Your Credit Report (p. 49)
- \_\_\_ Activity #16: Preparing for Independence (p. 51)
- \_\_\_ Activity #17: Housing Practice Money Map (p. 57)
- \_\_\_ Activity #18: My Housing Wants and Needs (p. 61)
- \_\_\_ Activity #19: Comparison Shopping for a Home (p. 63)
- \_\_\_ Activity #20: Fund the Assistive Technology You Need (p. 73)

If you checked all 20 activities, congratulations! It was a lot of work, but now you are taking control of your money and your future!

**Lauren uses her iPad to manage her money.**



### **Penny Pincher Says!**

Keep this book handy so you can keep managing your money and your future.





# Additional Resources

In doing the research for this book, we discovered a number of resources that you may find useful. This list is by no means exhaustive. We have included a few websites that have games. We think games are fun to play and can help reinforce some of the concepts that are included in this book. We have also included a number of websites that contain links to other valuable resources. Please let us know if you find additional resources not on this list that we should include in our next version of this book.

## **Broke Millennial: Stop Scraping By and Get Your Financial Life Together**

Written by a millennial herself, this book is both entertaining and full of useful financial information that will help you get a grip on your personal finances. With a conversational and relatable tone, *Broke Millennial* is geared toward the 20-something crowd, but there are details in here that anyone would benefit from. Learn more and order the book at <https://brokemillennial.com>.

## **Building Your Financial House**

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency's (PHFA) website, Building Your Financial House, offers a curriculum of comprehensive financial education addressing investing in yourself, maximizing earnings, spending sensibly, checking taxes, making money work through saving and investing, protecting your financial potential, and borrowing to grow. For more information, visit <http://www.buildingyourfinancialhouse.org/>.

## **Consumer Action Handbook: Be a Smarter Consumer**

This guide is full of information to help you make better choices when buying products and services. There are tips about preventing identity theft, understanding credit, managing debt, purchasing a car, how to rent an apartment, how to file a complaint about a purchase, and so much more. They also provide some resources specifically for people with disabilities and seniors. For more information, visit <https://www.usa.gov/handbook>.

## **Consumer Credit Counseling**

If you find yourself in need of help with credit counseling services, which include debt consolidation assistance and budgeting counseling, visit the website of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, <http://www.pabar.org/site/For-the-Public/LRE/Law-Related-Information>. You can find a list of approved agencies that provide credit counseling in Pennsylvania, and other related resources.

## **Counseling Network**

PHFA has a network of counselors throughout the state who provide free credit counseling, financial counseling and coaching, financial education, housing counseling, and first-time homebuyer education. Learn more at <https://www.phfa.org/counseling/fe.aspx>.



## **Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy**

The Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy is a coalition of organizations that share an interest in advancing financial literacy among students. Jump\$tart's online clearinghouse has a very comprehensive collection of financial education resources, including booklets and pamphlets on specific topics, activities, online games, and teacher lesson plans. For more information, visit <http://jumpstart.org>.

## **Money Smart—a Financial Education Program**

Created by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), *Money Smart* is a comprehensive financial education curriculum that teaches the basics of handling money and finances, including how to budget, save money, and how to avoid making wrong decisions that may result in years of financial pain. The curriculum is available free of charge. For additional information, call toll-free 877-275-3342 or go online to <http://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/index.html>.

## **Money Under 30**

This personal finance site has articles on practically everything you might need to know about managing your finances. Search around under a specific topic (like credit cards, debt payoff, or home buying) or check back regularly to find articles on the latest subjects in personal finance. For more information, visit <https://www.moneyunder30.com/>.

## **MyMoney**

MyMoney.gov is the U.S. government's website dedicated to financial education. Resources are available to learn about budgeting, credit building, financial planning, understanding privacy issues, saving and investing. There are links to other government programs that offer financial educational programs, such as Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission. For more information, visit [www.mymoney.gov](http://www.mymoney.gov) or call 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636).

## **National Foundation for Credit Counseling**

As the nation's largest financial counseling organization, NFCC provides information about all of the non-profit credit counseling agencies in Pennsylvania. Credit counselors provide such services as credit/debt counseling, bankruptcy counseling, housing and mortgage counseling, and student loan debt counseling. For more information, go to <https://www.nfcc.org>.

## **Pathways PA**

A non-profit organization with offices in Southeastern Pennsylvania, Pathways PA has several programs that are designed to help "women, teens, children and families achieve economic independence and family well-being." Pathways PA has published several booklets on financial education and they, along with their volunteers, offer free tax preparation to filers through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. For more information, visit their website [www.pathwayspa.org](http://www.pathwayspa.org) or call 610-543-5022.

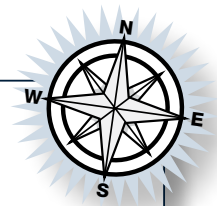
## **Practical Money Skills for Life**

To help people learn about the essentials of personal finance, Visa has partnered with consumer advocates, educators and financial institutions to develop the Practical Money Skills programs. You can access free educational resources, including personal finance articles, lesson plans, and games (including the popular Financial Football and Soccer games) from their website, [www.practicalmoneyskills.com](http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com).

## **Your Money, Your Goals**

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) developed a toolkit, Your Money, Your Goals, for front line staff and volunteers who work with individuals who are interested in establishing goals, learning about and choosing financial products and building skills in managing money, credit and debt. There are free, downloadable guides for students, people with disabilities, veterans and service members, and older adults and caregivers. For more information, go to <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals>.

Please use “My Personal Statement of Income and Spending” and the “My Personal Money Map” worksheets that follow.



## My Personal Statement of Income and Spending for the Month of \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 1: My Needs

Description	Amount
1. _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____
7. _____	\$ _____

**Step 2: My Total Needs** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 3: My Wants

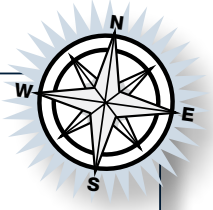
Description	Amount
1. _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____

**Step 4: My Total Wants** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 5: My Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 6: My Total Monthly Income** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 7: My Cash Flow (Income – Expenses)** \$ \_\_\_\_\_



## My Personal Money Map

Month: \_\_\_\_\_

My Needs Descriptions	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
1. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
7. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
8. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Needs	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Wants Descriptions	Planned Spending	Actual Spending
1. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
3. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
4. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
5. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
6. _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Wants	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Expenses (Total Needs + Total Wants)	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Total Monthly Income	\$ _____	\$ _____
My Cash Flow (Income – Expenses)	\$ _____	\$ _____

# Glossary

**A Annual Fee:** A yearly payment charged by many credit card companies for use of their card.

**Asset:** Something you own that has value. An example of an asset is a house, vehicle, or savings account.

**Assistive Technology (AT):** A device that helps a person who has a disability do the things he or she wants to do. Examples of AT devices include an adapted vehicle, a ramp into a home, an iPad, hearing aids, and a wheelchair or scooter.

The federal definition of an assistive technology (AT) device is “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.” [29 U.S.C. Sec 202(2)]

An assistive technology service is defined as any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. The term also includes designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, maintaining, repairing, or replacing AT devices.

**ATM:** ATM stands for Automated Teller Machine. This is a machine that allows you to take money out of or put money into your checking or savings account without having to go directly to your bank or credit union. You can also check your account balances at an ATM.

**Authorize:** To give your permission.

**B Balance:** Balance means “amount.” It can refer to the amount of money you have in your checking or savings account; or, the amount that is owed on a credit card or another type of loan.

**Balance Carried Forward:** Used at the start of a month to show how much money is in your account. When balance forward is used on a bill, it shows either the amount your account is charged or credited from a previous billing cycle.

**Bank:** A for-profit financial institution that provides financial services to its customers. These services include such things as checking and savings accounts, access to loan products, debit cards, online banking and financial education. You should look for a bank that is insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC).

**Benefits:** Many people need help paying for food, housing, utilities, medical care and other basic items. The state and federal governments have developed programs that can help pay for these things. These programs are called government benefits.

**C** **Cash:** Cash is the currency (paper bills) and coins you have on hand. You use cash to pay for something immediately.

**Cash Flow:** The difference between your income and your expenses.

**Checking Account:** A service, offered by a bank or credit union, which allows you to put your cash in a safe place and then use it whenever you need it. You get your money from your checking account by writing checks, or using your ATM or debit card.

**Countable Resources:** Certain assets are not counted when the Social Security Administration determines financial eligibility for SSI, or when Pennsylvania determines financial eligibility for Medical Assistance. For a complete list of assets that are not counted, go to <https://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-resources-ussi.htm>.

**Credit:** Money that you can borrow with the promise to repay it at a later date. If you pay with cash, you pay immediately. If you use credit, you agree to pay in the future.

**Credit Bureau:** A company that compiles information reported by your creditors and provides information on a person's borrowing and repayment habits.

**Credit Card:** A plastic card issued by a bank or business that allows you to purchase items now and pay for them later.

**Credit History:** A record of how you have managed your credit and debts in the past. It includes information on borrowing and repayment of credit cards, bank and car loans, mortgages and any other debt owed to someone. An individual's credit history will include open accounts and accounts that have closed. It lists late payments, defaults on loans and bankruptcies.

**Credit Limit:** The maximum amount of credit (money) that a financial institution will authorize for your use. The credit limit is based on your credit history and income.

**Credit Report:** A report of your credit history. A credit report is a system lenders use to decide whether or not to give you credit, or a loan, and how much interest they will charge you. Your credit report is a record of how much you owe and how well you pay it back. A credit report will include such information as where you live, your work history, your repayments on loans, whether you've filed and been discharged from a bankruptcy, and if you have any tax liens.

**Credit Score:** A number that represents the credit-worthiness of a person, or the likelihood that a person will pay back a debt. Often a FICO (Fair, Isaac and Company) score is reported on your credit report. The higher the number, the better your credit score.

**Credit Union:** A non-profit, community-based financial company that provides its members with checking and savings accounts, loans, financial education, access to debit cards, credit cards and online banking. Many credit unions also provide services and grants that support community development. You should look for a credit union that is insured by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA).



**D Debit Card:** A plastic card that is connected to your credit union or bank account. When you use it to buy something in a store, money is taken directly out of your checking or savings account. Debit cards can also be used for the withdrawal of cash. Debit cards work the same way as paying for something with cash.

**Debt:** Money that you have borrowed and must repay.

**Deficit:** When there isn't enough money to cover all expenses. For example, if you want something that costs \$20 but you only have \$15, then you have a deficit of \$5.

**Deposit:** To put money into a checking or savings account. It is the opposite of withdraw.

**Due Date:** The date on the calendar when your bill must be paid.

**E Earned Income:** The money you receive from a job.

**Equity:** The value of an asset (such as your home or vehicle) minus what you owe on any loans (such as a mortgage or vehicle loan payment) connected to it.

**Expenses:** What you spend money on, whether you pay in cash or with a check or charge to a credit card.

**F FDIC:** Federal Deposit Insurance Fund.

**Finances:** This is another word for everything that has to do with your money, including your checking and savings accounts, and your income and expenses. It's important to learn how to manage your finances, instead of letting your money manage you.

**Food Stamp Program:** Now called SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), this is a government program available to families and individuals who are low-income, to help with the cost of food.

**G Gross Earnings:** The total amount of your earned income.

**Guarantee:** A guarantee is a promise or assurance (typically in writing) to assume responsibility for something. A loan guarantee is a promise by someone to assume the debt obligation of a borrower if he does not repay his loan.

**I Income:** This is the money you have to live on. Your money can come from such sources as earnings from a job, Supplemental Security Income, a pension, and SNAP (food stamps).

**Insurance:** This is a word meaning protection from loss.

**Interest:** A fee you pay when you borrow money, such as a loan. When you deposit your money into a bank or credit union savings account, the bank pays interest to you.

**L Lease:** A legal contract where one person lends something to another person for a specified time (apartment, vehicle, equipment, etc.), usually in exchange for payments.

**Liability Insurance:** Protects you from a lawsuit if someone is injured or suffers property damage while in your rental unit.

**M Medical Assistance (MA):** Also known as Medicaid, is a government program that provides medical insurance for people who are low-income.

**Medicare:** Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people 65 or older, as well as people under 65 who have a permanent disability or medical condition.

**Minimum Monthly Payment:** The lowest payment the credit card company, or other lender, will accept toward your balance owed each month.

**Money Mapping:** Money mapping is a new term for budgeting, and involves understanding your income and tracking your expenses, making short and long-term savings and spending goals, and building good credit.

**Mortgage:** A specific type of loan for the purchase of a home. You make a promise to the lender to repay the loan, with interest, during the course of 15 or 30 years.

**N NCUSIF:** National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund.

**Need:** Something you must have to survive, like a place to live and enough food to eat.

**Net Earnings:** The amount you take home, after taxes and other deductions have been taken out of your total (gross) earnings.

**P Payroll Deduction:** Money that is taken out of your earnings by an employer to pay taxes, health insurance, retirement benefits, and other items.

**Peril:** An insurance term for the cause of a possible loss, like a fire

**Phishing:** A kind of identity theft where criminals try to get your personal information by pretending to be an honest business.

**PIN:** A PIN (Personal Identification Number) is the secret code you use to gain access to the money in your accounts. It's best not to share your PIN with other people. If you must, because you need assistance, always ask for a receipt and check your monthly bank statements.

**R Rebate:** A rebate can be an additional discount when you purchase a product or it can be a partial refund if you have paid too much money for taxes, rent, or a utility, such as electricity, gas, or water.

**Receipt:** Usually a paper, or an online statement, that lists the items you purchased and the amount you paid for them. A receipt is proof that you paid for an item.

**Refund:** A repayment of a sum of money, typically to a customer who is not satisfied with something that was purchased. This means that a store promises to give back all or some of the money that was spent if you're not happy with what you bought. To get a refund you usually need to show a receipt.

**Revolving Credit:** A type of credit that a borrower may use to withdraw funds up to a preapproved amount. The amount of available credit decreases and increases as funds are borrowed and then repaid. The credit may be used repeatedly. The borrower makes payments based only on the amount that is actually used or withdrawn, plus interest. The borrower may repay over time, or in-full.

**S Salary:** The amount of money an employer agrees to pay an employee.

**Savings Account:** A secure place to keep your money for future use. Money deposited in a savings account earns interest over time.

**Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI):** An earned benefit for people with significant disabilities who are no longer able to work. SSDI is funded through payroll taxes, so the amount you receive is based on how long you've worked and how much you have paid into the system.

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI):** A federal (unearned) income benefit for adults and children with disabilities, and adults 65+, who have limited income and resources. SSI is funded by general tax dollars and provides a cash benefit that pays for basic living needs.

**Surplus:** Money left over. If you have \$50 and you spend \$40, you have a surplus of \$10, meaning you have \$10 left. A surplus is the opposite of a deficit.

**U Unearned Income:** The money you receive that does not come from a job.

**User ID:** This is a made-up name you choose to use to identify yourself when you are signing in to an account. It's best not to share your username with anyone. If you must share your username because you need assistance, be sure you trust that person.

**Utilities:** Services such as electricity, gas, water and heating oil.

**V Values:** Those ideas and beliefs that really matter to each of us.

**Veteran Benefits:** These are benefits received by a person who has served in the United States military.

**W Wages:** This is what you earn when your job pays you by the number of hours you work or for each piece of work you complete.

**Waivers:** Programs funded with a combination of Pennsylvania and federal government dollars that provide supports and services to people with disabilities who live in the community. Services include, for example, assistive technology, accessibility adaptations (home modifications), vehicle adaptations, habilitation, personal assistance services, community integration, and transportation. People who live in a nursing home or in another institution cannot receive waiver services.

**Want:** Something you might like to have, but you don't need it to live.

**Withdrawal:** Money you take out of your bank or credit union account. A withdrawal is the opposite of a deposit (putting money into an account).

**Work Incentives:** Work Incentives are programs that the Social Security Administration (SSA) offers to people with disabilities who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) to help make it possible for them to explore work while still receiving health care and cash benefits.

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